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The Fairy Tales of Hans Christian Andersen

An 1

WITH UPWARDS OF FOUR
HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS
BY HELEN STRATTON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY EDWARD E. HALE, D.D.

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INTRODUCTION

Hans Christian Andersen, without knowing it, prescribed a healthy tonic for more than one writer in England and America. It would be a pity not to acknowledge this.

He was not well known in either country when Mary Howitt published her translations of his stories in England. Perhaps her intimacy with Frederica Bremer, the Swedish novelist, opened the way to her acquaintance with the Danish story-teller.

The children of England and America had the first benefit of this invasion of the Dane. For, by a rather provoking law, it will happen that the literature of childhood is sadly apt to fall into the ruts of sentimentalists or of mechanics. "Anybody can write a child's book" is the false theory of publishers in the decline which comes upon children's books once in a generation. As an experienced editor once said to me, ninety-nine hundredths of the articles sent to him about boys and girls are written by ladies who never had the charge of either boy or girl.

Into the midst of books thus written down for children there comes, once in a generation, such a revelation as the publication of Grimm's Fairy Tales made early in this century, as the appearance in England of Andersen's children's stories, made. And again, such as children enjoyed when Stevenson's poems for them appeared. Probably Stevenson's poems would not have been written but for such prose poems as

"The Constant Tin Soldier."

"For certain soldiers lately dead
Our reverent dirge shall here be said:
Them, when their martial leader called,
No dread preparative appalled,
But leaden-hearted, leaden-heeled,
I marked them steadfast in the field.

Death grimly sided with the foe,
And smote each leaden hero low;
Proudly they perished one by one;
The dread pea-cannon's work was done!
Oh not for them the tears we shed,
Consigned to their congenial lead;
But while unmoved their sleep they take,
We mourn for their dear captain's sake,—
For their dear captain, who shall smart
Both in his pocket and his heart,
Who saw his heroes shed their gore,
And lacked a penny to buy more."

I do not venture to describe the indescribable, and so I will not try to analyze the charm of Andersen's children's stories. They can speak for themselves. They do speak for themselves in the memories of all those young people who, if I may say so, were brought up on them. There is sentiment in them, because there is sentiment in all life; but it is not a morbid or manufactured sentiment. It is the sentiment which belongs to the occasion. Here is what I have meant when I say that he administered a healthful tonic to all those writers for children who had sense enough to wish to improve on their own methods. For the mere mechanics, the people who build stories up as a child makes a mud pie,—so much water and so much clay, without going farther than the water and the clay,—no tonic is possible.

People generally speak as if "The Improvisatore" were the autobiography of Andersen, and as if whoever has read that understands his life. This does not seem to me quite broad enough. His own memoir of himself, which has been translated by Mrs. Howitt, gives a very curious picture of life in Den-

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mark. It shows us what that gallant little kingdom is, has been, and may be. And in the midst of a charming egotism,—perhaps because of this charming egotism—it reveals Andersen to us in a way which makes us love him more and not less.

It is immensely to the credit of the artists of Copenhagen, of the people of rank there, of what Mrs. Grundy calls "Society," that this boy, only not a beggar boy, landing in the streets there with nothing but hope and one rixthaler, should have pressed his way forward and upward till he became the Dane spoken of most often in the literary circles of the world. It makes one believe in small kingdoms, small commonwealths—may I say, in Brick Moons?—when one sees the cordiality, the best form of charity, the distinguished care, with which Copenhagen could take care of such a Danish boy when he needed care. His first attempts at fame are made when he goes upon the stage of the theatre as one of the "populace," dressed in the dress which was made out of his father's coat for his own confirmation. He thinks to be a singer, and is not fit to be a singer. He thinks to be a poet, and they do not accept him as a poet; this is their fault, not his. But he then does what he can do: he writes, and writes the truth. He tells what he has seen, with that admirable unwillingness to try to tell what he has not seen. Realism, the realism of the nineteenth century, about which much is absurdly said and sung, appears, whether in the story of the tin soldier or in romance so called, made out of the life of a fiddler.

And here, as it seems to me, is the tonic which this Danish peasant administered to the literature of England and America. I do not know whether he did as much good in Denmark as he did here; I do not know whether they needed it as much as I think it was needed by the writers for children here; I do know that this quiet use of language, in which there is a nominative case for the thing that is described, and a good steadfast verb which describes that thing; in which there is no rushing north, south, east, or west for an effect which is visible and at hand,—I do know that this use of language is an excellent example for young authors or for old.

It is fifty-four years since Mary Howitt introduced this shepherd of the people to people who could not read Danish but could read English. This English nation for whom she wrote, and the American nation which is born from that English nation, would not be what they are if, some thousand years ago, rather more than less, certain Danes, so called, had not occasionally found their way into English seaports, and when they chose colonized the lands of the inhabitants. It is not simply that a quaint word or two slipped from their dialect into ours. There is more than that. The blood of Norsemen is in our veins. Perhaps it is true that the habit of calling a spade a spade was particularly a Danish habit. Perhaps the Danes had the gift of using words of one syllable where the Latin nations preferred to use words of four syllables; they liked to say Thor, and did not like to say Diispeter. And perhaps,—these are only my guesses, but I am in the habit of thinking that we like to hear Jenny Lind sing, that we like to read the poems of Tegner and the voyages of Nansen, that we like to find the *Linnea borealis* on the slopes of the White Mountains, because we are all Scandinavians in blood. Perhaps this is the reason why we and our children like to read Hans Christian Andersen.

It may please the reader to have a little remembrance of Andersen, which I copy from a private note of one of his friends: "I once had the good fortune to pass four months under the same roof with Hans Christian Andersen. I often heard him read his fairy tales, and one beautiful moonlight night he wrote down these lines to me. The following is a literal translation of the autograph:

"'The moon shines round and full
Over field and swamp,
And in the stillness of the wood
Grows the Rose of Poesy.'

He then gathered this bouquet in the garden where we were, and gave it to me as a remembrance of him, but I shall not forget him even without it." The faded rose is in the letter from which I copy the lines.

EDWARD E. HALE

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"Swe-e-ep," cried a voice—the little chimney-sweeper's, who had just climbed the chimney and stuck his head out 289
Stirred slowly, deep in thought 289
The white-faced child dreamed too, her lashes wet with unshed tears 290
They crept into corners of the room, but he found each one, and snuffed at them, and did no harm . 291
The bear lay down, and the baby climbed on him, and hid his head in the shaggy fur. . . . 291
So they began marching—Right, left; Right, left! 292
Piling up the clothes round a chair, making out that he was playing statues 292
"Don't be angry, mother dear," I only said, "and a lot of butter, please" 293

The Bronze Pig

He sat himself on the Bronze Pig's back, and ere he was aware of it sank into slumber . . . 294
The bronze horse that bears the Duke's statue neighed out loud. 295
"What do you bring back?" she asked the boy. 296
"Innocent souls know each other," said the woman, and petted dog and child 297
Beheld Bellissima barking, as if to say, "Hallo! I'm here too". 298
The creature shivered with cold, and he took to his heels at full speed 299
The woman bemoaned her dog, and the boy wept 299
"You bad, bad boy! The poor little creature!" was all she could utter 300

Ib and Little Christine

There they found some snipe's eggs—a great event in their lives 301
As both wanted it at once, the result was that they let it fall into the water. 302
At last they were quite lost in the bushes 302
On her back she had a bundle, and in her hand a knotted stick. She was a gipsy 303
"You must have that," said Christine, "and it's so pretty, too". 304
He set it in the hinge of the door and broke the shell, but there was little inside 304

PAGE
" Did you know me then, Ib ? " she said 305
So he set himself to write, but the words would not come 305
Where the plough had cut it, it glittered before him 306
Life and joy reigned there, for there was little Christine 307

The Cripple

But Hans was pleased with it 308
" Good-night," said the king ; " now you can go home and curse your folly " 309
The swineherd sat in the ditch, and laughed and sang. " I am that most fortunate man " . . . 311
Even people quite out on the high-road could hear it singing 312
He held the cage in his hands, and ran with it out of the door into the road 313

The Old Bachelor's Nightcap

Seated on the bed he chanted an evening psalm. 315
One pip the little girl proposed they should plant in the earth 315
" Lady Holle ! Lady Holle ! " she cried, loud and clear 316
" I dare kiss him," she would cry, and throw her arms round his neck 317
He longed to say, " Lady Holle, Lady Holle, open the door to me ! " 318
Wine, bread, and all the basket held, miraculously changed to roses 319
Prone he lay, clasping in death his old nightcap 320

The Red Shoes

THERE was once a little girl who was delicately pretty, but who was obliged to walk about with bare feet in summer (for she was poor), and to wear coarse wooden shoes in winter, so that her little insteps were red all over.

In the village lived an old shoemaker's wife, who fashioned a little pair of shoes as well as she could out of some old strips of red cloth; they were rather clumsy, but the intention was kind, for they were to give to the little girl, whose name was Karen.

She received the red shoes, and put them on, for the first time, on the very day her mother was buried. They were not fit for mourning, it is true, but having no others, she put them on to her bare feet, and followed the pauper's coffin to its last resting-place.

There happened to pass by a large, old-fashioned carriage, in which sat an old lady, who took compassion on the little girl, and said to the preacher: "Pray, give me that little girl, and I will adopt her."

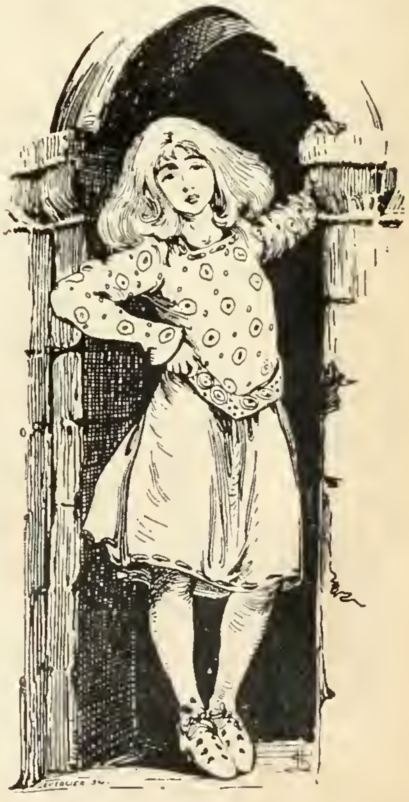
And Karen fancied that all this was owing to the red shoes; but the old lady thought them abominable, and ordered them to be burnt. Karen then was dressed in clean and tidy clothes, and was taught to read and to sew, and people said she was pretty. But the looking-glass said: "You are more than pretty—you are beautiful!"

The queen once travelled through the land, with her little daughter, who was a princess. And crowds flocked towards the palace, and Karen stood amongst the rest, to see the little princess, who stood at a window, dressed in the finest white clothes. She had neither a train, nor a golden crown, but beautiful red morocco shoes—which, it must be confessed, were a trifle prettier than those the shoemaker's wife had patched together for little Karen. Surely nothing in the world can be compared to red shoes!

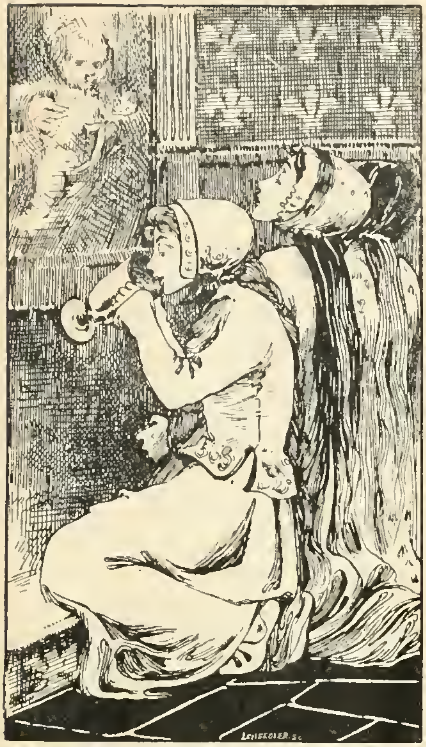
Karen was now old enough to be confirmed. She had new clothes given her, and she was to have a pair of new shoes likewise. The rich shoemaker of the town took the measure of her little foot in his own house, in a room where a number of glass cases were filled with elegant shoes and shining boots. It was a very pretty sight; but as the old lady could not see very well, she took no pleasure in it. Amongst the shoes was a pair of red ones, just like those the princess wore. How pretty they were, to be sure! The shoemaker said they had been made for a count's child, but had not fitted well.

"Are they of polished leather?" asked the old lady, "for they shine so."

"They shine, indeed," said Karen; and they fitted her and were purchased. But the old lady did not know they were red, or she would never have allowed Karen to go to be confirmed in red shoes, which she, however, now did.



THE PRINCESS STOOD AT A WINDOW.



SHE THOUGHT ONLY OF HER SHOES.

Everybody looked at her feet. And when she stepped across the church to reach the choir, she fancied that even the old pictures over the graves, the portraits of preachers and their wives, with their stiff collars and long black clothes, were fixing their eyes on her red shoes. And she thought of nothing but them, even when the preacher laid his hand on her head, and descanted on the holy baptism that admitted her within the pale of God's servants, and reminded her that she must now behave like a grown Christian. And the organ pealed solemnly, while the children's voices joined with those of the choristers; but Karen thought of nothing but her red shoes.

In the afternoon, the old lady heard everybody say that the shoes were red; and she said it was quite shocking, and highly improper, and that in future Karen must always go to church in black shoes, even though they should be somewhat worn.

Next Sunday she was to receive the sacrament; and Karen looked first at the black shoes and then at the red ones, and then looked again, and finished by putting on the red ones.

The sun shone brightly. Karen and the old lady went by the footway across the cornfield, which was rather dusty. Near the church door stood an old invalid soldier, with a crutch-stick, and a singularly long beard, that was red rather than white, for he had red hair. And he stooped to the ground, and asked the old lady if he might wipe her shoes. And Karen likewise put out her little foot. "See, what smart dancing pumps!" said the soldier; "they will stick on firmly when you dance"; and thereupon, he slapped the soles with his hand.

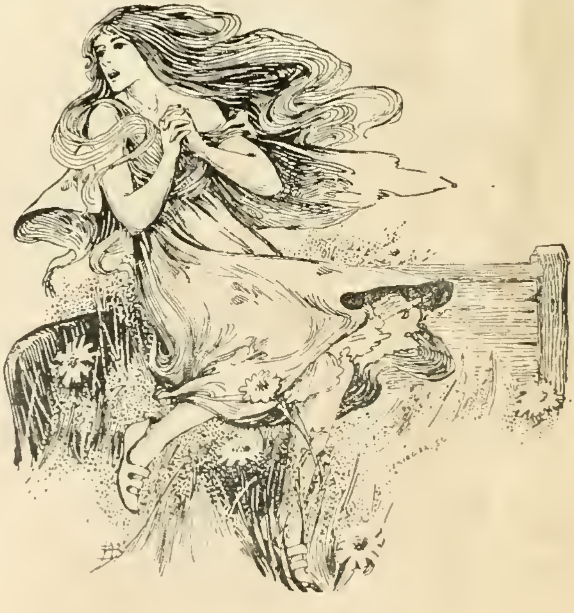
The old lady gave the invalid soldier some alms, and entered the church with Karen.

And everybody inside looked at Karen's red shoes, and all the pictures looked at them; and when Karen knelt before the altar, and put the gold cup to her lips, she thought only of her red shoes: and it seemed to her as though they were swimming in the communion cup; and she forgot to sing her psalm, and forgot to say the Lord's prayer.

The congregation now left the church, and the old lady got into her carriage. As Karen raised her foot to step in after her, the old soldier said: "See, what smart dancing pumps!" And Karen could not help making a few dancing steps, and having once begun, her feet went on dancing. It was just as if the shoes had some power over her. She danced round the church corner, and could not stop herself, and the coachman was obliged to run after her and catch hold of her, and lift her into the carriage; but her feet went on dancing, so that she trod upon the good old lady's toes at a great rate. At last the shoes were taken off her feet, which then obtained rest.

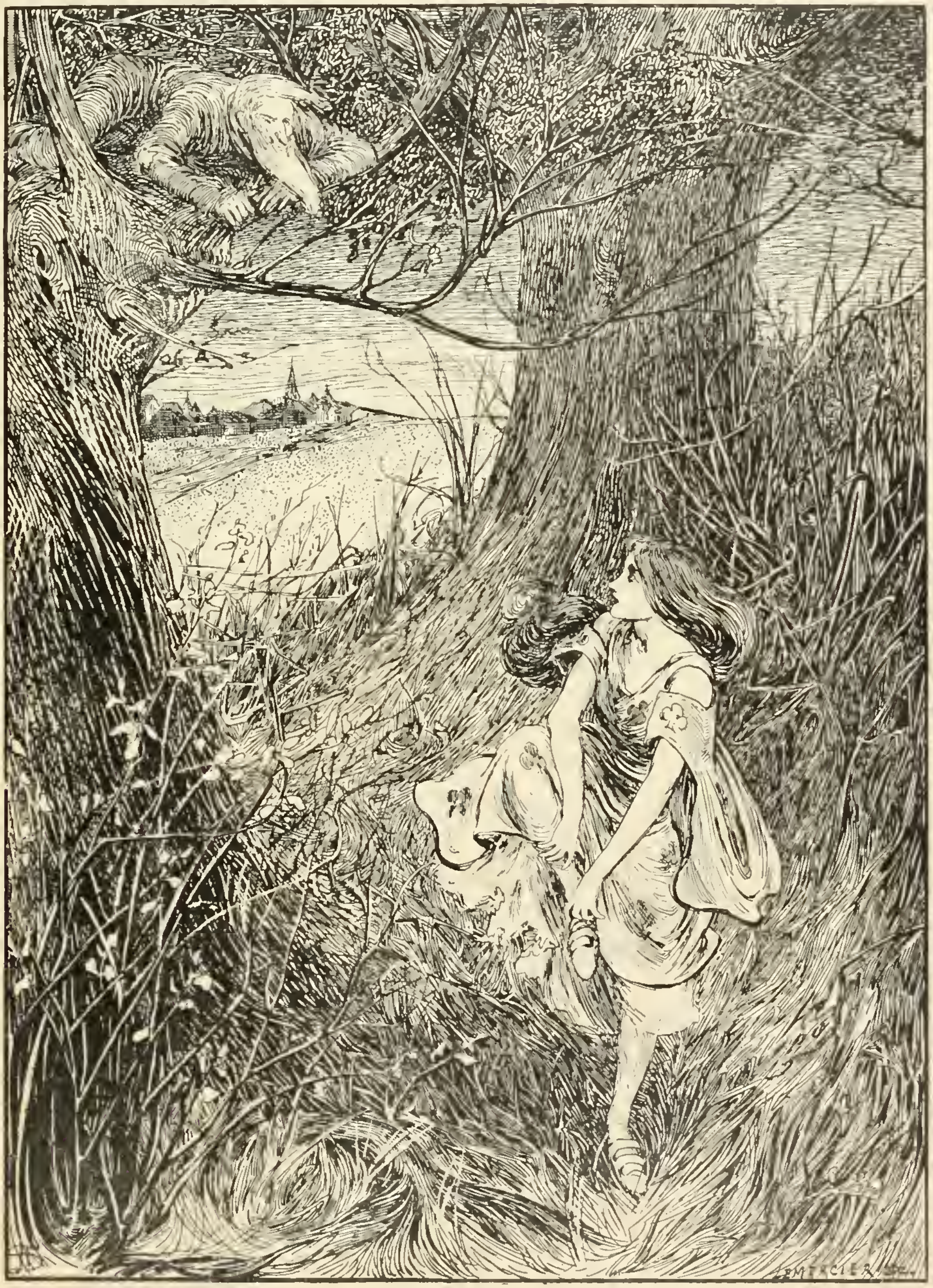
The shoes were put by into a closet at home, but Karen could not cease looking at them.

The old lady now fell ill, and it was said she could not live. She had to be nursed and waited on, and it was nobody's business to attend her so much as Karen's; but there happened to be a great ball in the town, to which Karen was invited, and she gazed at the old lady, who was not likely to recover, and then looked at her red



SHE COULD NOT STOP HERSELF.

shoes, and thought there could not be any very great sin in putting them on—and so far there was not — but she next went to the ball, and began to dance: only, when she wanted to go to the right, the shoes would dance to the left: and when she wanted to go up the room, the shoes persisted in going down the room; and then down the steps into the street, and out through the town gate. And she danced on, in spite of herself, right into the gloomy forest.



IT WAS THE OLD SOLDIER.

Something was gleaming through the tops of the trees, and she thought it was the moon—for it was a face—but it was the old soldier with his red beard, who sat and nodded, saying: "See, what pretty dancing pumps!"

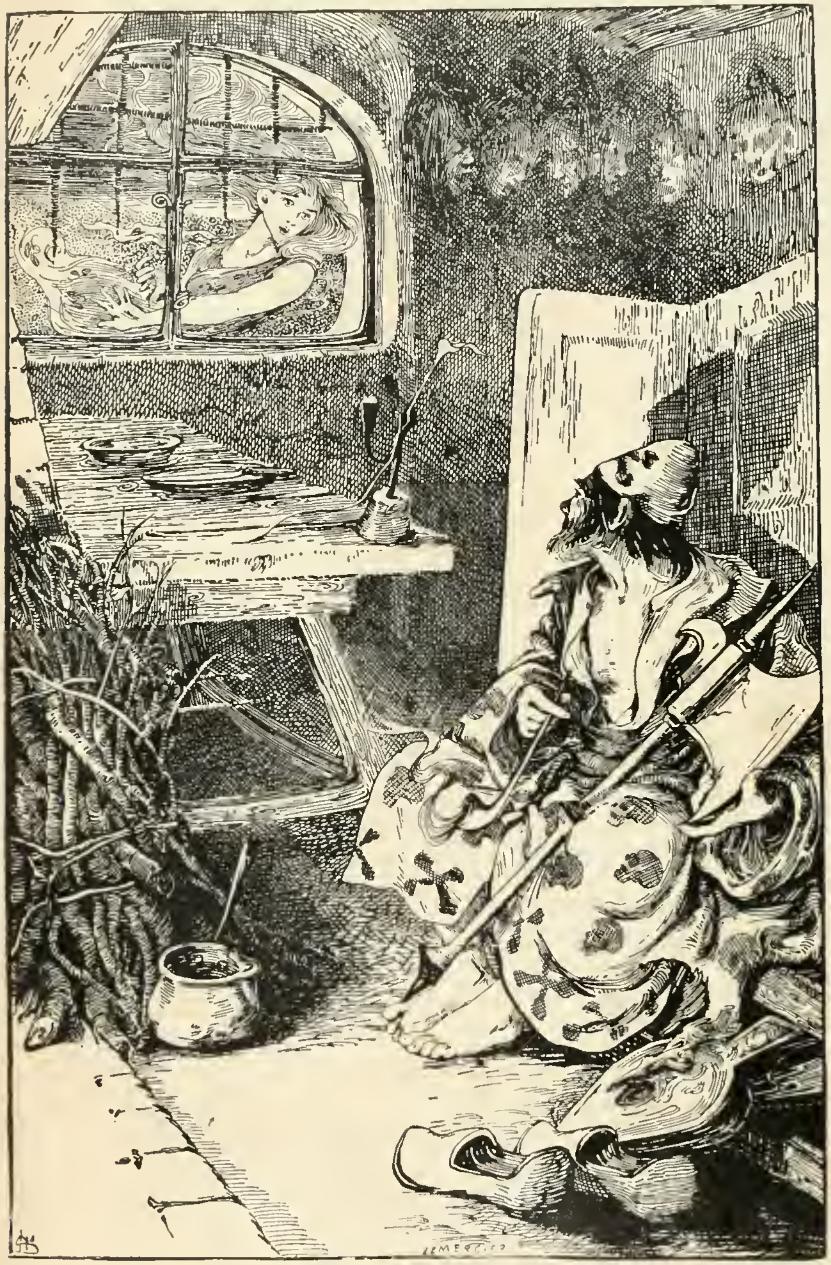
She was now frightened, and tried to fling off the red shoes, but they clung fast; and she tore off her stockings. But the shoes had, as it were, grown to her feet, and dance she must, across fields and meadows—in rain or in sunshine—by day and by night—only by night it was far more dreadful still.

She danced up to the open churchyard, where the dead did not dance, having something much better to do. She would fain have sat down on some pauper's grave, where grows the bitter fern; but there was no rest for her. And as she danced towards the open church door, she saw an angel, in long white clothes, and with wings that reached from his shoulders down to the earth. His countenance was stern and grave, and his hand grasped a broad and shining sword.

"Thou shalt dance!" said he, "dance in thy red shoes, until thou art pale and cold, and till thy skin has shrivelled up to a skeleton. Thou shalt dance from door to door; and thou shalt knock at the doors where live proud and haughty children, that they may hear thee, and take warning! Thou shalt dance — yea, dance——"

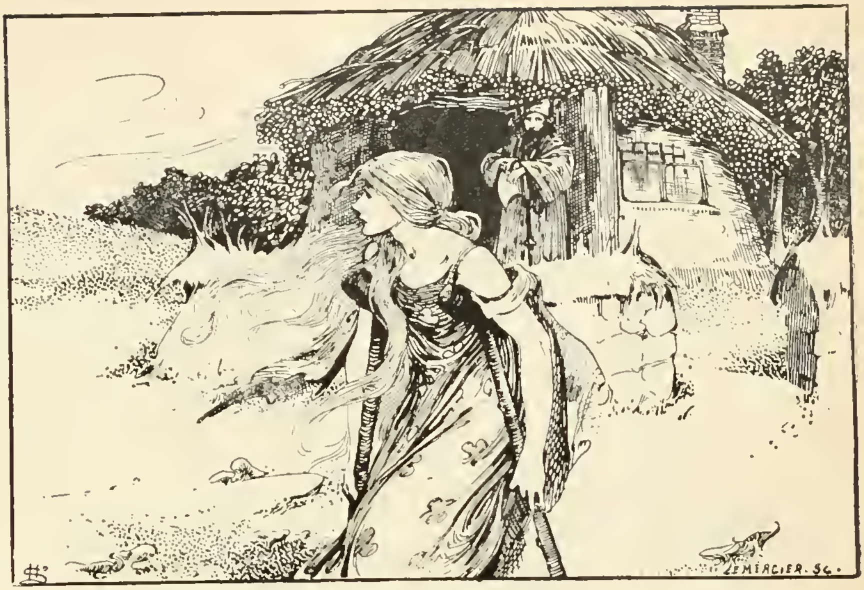
"Mercy!" cried Karen. But she heard not what the angel answered, for the shoes carried her from the door into the field, away—away—still dancing on and on.

One morning she danced past a well-known door; she heard the sounds of a dirge from within, and a coffin, decked with flowers, was brought forth: and she now knew that her old patroness was dead, and she felt as though she were abandoned by every one, and cursed by God's angel.



SHE TAPPED AT THE WINDOW.

On she danced, for dance she must—aye, dance through the gloomy night. The shoes carried her through brambles and stumps of trees, which scratched her till she bled. And she danced across the heath, to a little lonely house, where she knew the executioner lived; and she tapped at the windows with her fingers, saying:


LEMERCIER. SC.

SHE WENT ACROSS THE HEATH.

"Come out — come out. I cannot come in, for I am obliged to dance."

And the executioner said:

"Do you not know who I am? It is I who strike off wicked men's heads, and I perceive that my axe now clinks."

"Do not strike off my head," said Karen, "for then I shall not be able to repent of my sins. But strike my feet off, that I may get rid of my red shoes."

And she then confessed her sins, and the executioner struck off her red shoes only, though it gave her as sharp a pang as if her toes had come off with them. And away the shoes danced, across the fields, and into the depths of the forest.

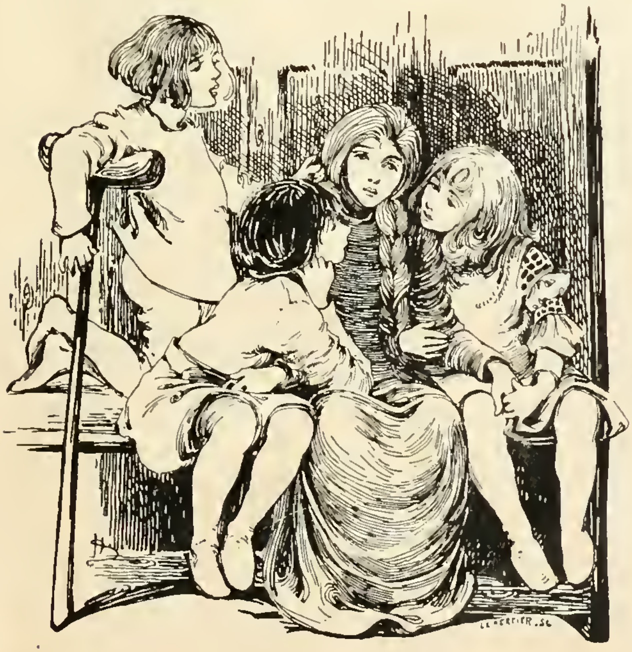
He then gave her crutches, for she felt unable to walk, and taught her the psalm that penitents sing, and she kissed the hand that had directed the axe, and went away across the heath.

"I have now suffered enough for the red shoes," said she; "so now I will go to church, that people may see me." And she hobbled up to the church door, but had no sooner reached it, than the red shoes danced before her, and frightened her back.

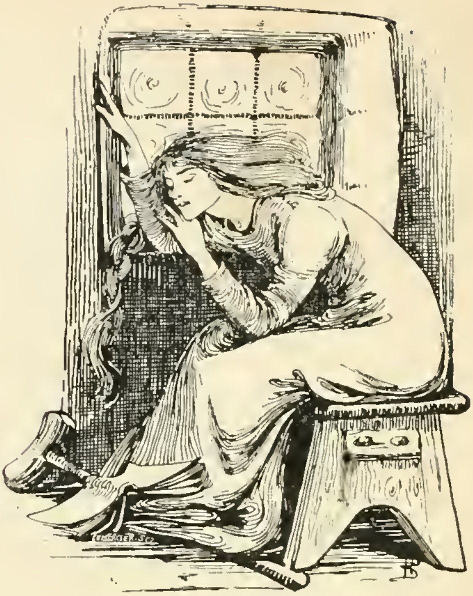
She was in deep affliction that whole week, and shed many bitter tears; but when Sunday came round again, she said: "I have now suffered and struggled enough! I believe I am quite as good as many of those who are sitting at church, and bridling up." And she sallied boldly forth, but she reached no farther than the churchyard gate; for she saw the red shoes dancing before her, and was so frightened that she turned back, and heartily repented of her sins.

She then went to the parsonage, and begged, as a favour, to be taken into the family's service, promising to be diligent, and to do everything she could. She did not care about wages; all she wanted was to have a roof over her head, and to be with good people. The preacher's wife felt compassion for her, and took her into her service; and she proved very industrious and very thoughtful. She sat and listened with deep attention when the preacher read the Bible aloud in the evening. All the children made much of her; but when they spoke of dress, or finery, or beauty, she would then shake her head.

On the following Sunday they all went to church, and they asked her if she would accompany them; but she looked at her crutches with tearful eyes. And so the others went forth to listen to the Word of God, while she repaired alone to her little chamber, that was only just large enough to contain a bed and a chair. And here she sat down with her psalm-book in her hand; and as


LEMERCIER. SC.

ALL THE CHILDREN MADE MUCH OF HER.



HER SOUL WAS CARRIED UP TO GOD.

she read its pages, in a pious frame of mind, the wind wafted to her the sounds of the organ from the church, and she raised her tearful countenance, saying: "O Lord, do Thou succour me!"

Then the sun shone brightly, and before her stood God's angel, in white clothes, such as she had seen him that night near the church door; only he no longer bore the sharp sword in his hand, but held a beautiful green branch, all full of roses; and he touched the ceiling with it, and the ceiling forthwith became lofty; and at the spot where he had touched it shone a golden star. And he touched the walls, and they widened; and she could see the organ that was being played upon. She saw, too, the old pictures of the preachers and their wives, and the congregation sitting on their neat chairs, and singing out of their psalm-books. For the church itself had come to the poor girl in her small chamber, or she had come to it. She sat on a chair, amongst the rest of the preacher's servants, and when they had finished the psalm, and looked up, they nodded, and said: "That was right of you to come, Karen."

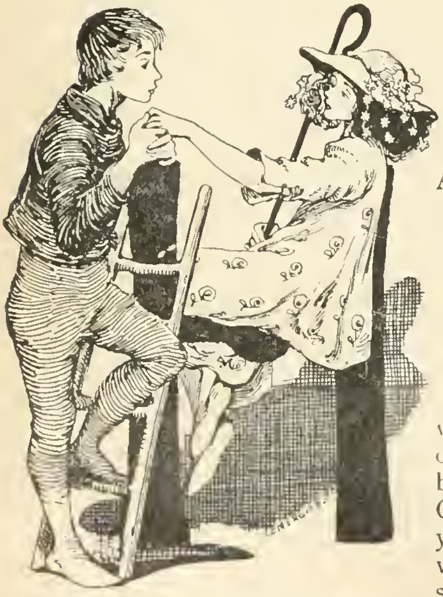
"It is by the grace of God," said she.

And the organ pealed forth, and the chorus of children's voices sounded most sweet and lovely! The bright sunshine shed its warm rays through the window, over the pew where Karen sat; and her heart was so overwhelmed with sunshine, peace, and joy, that it broke; and her soul was carried up to God on a sunbeam, and in Heaven there was no one who asked about the red shoes.

* * *

The Chimney Sweep

THE SHEPHERDESS AND THE CHIMNEY-SWEEPER



AVE you ever seen an old wooden cupboard, quite black with age, and ornamented with carved scrolls and foliage, and nondescript figures? Just such an one stood in a sitting-room; it was a legacy left by the great-grandmother of the family—it was covered from top to bottom with carved roses and tulips. There were the oddest scrolls, out of which peeped little stags' heads with their antlers. But in the middle of the cupboard was represented the full-length figure of a man; it is, true he was rather ridiculous to look at, and was grinning—for one could not call it laughing—and, moreover, he had goat's legs, little horns upon his head, and a long beard. The children always called him General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-Sergeant — there's a name for you! rather difficult to pronounce, certainly, nor are there many who obtain such a title — but to have had him carved was something indeed! However, there he was. He was always looking at the table under the looking-glass, where stood a pretty little china shepherdess. Her shoes were gilt, and her dress was ornamented with a red rose, besides which she had a golden hat and a crook; she was marvellously pretty to behold. Close by her side stood a little chimney-sweeper, as black as a coal, though likewise of china; he was just as clean and as delicate as another, and as to his being a chimney-sweeper, it was only that he represented one; the potter might just as well have made a prince out of him, for it would have been all one!

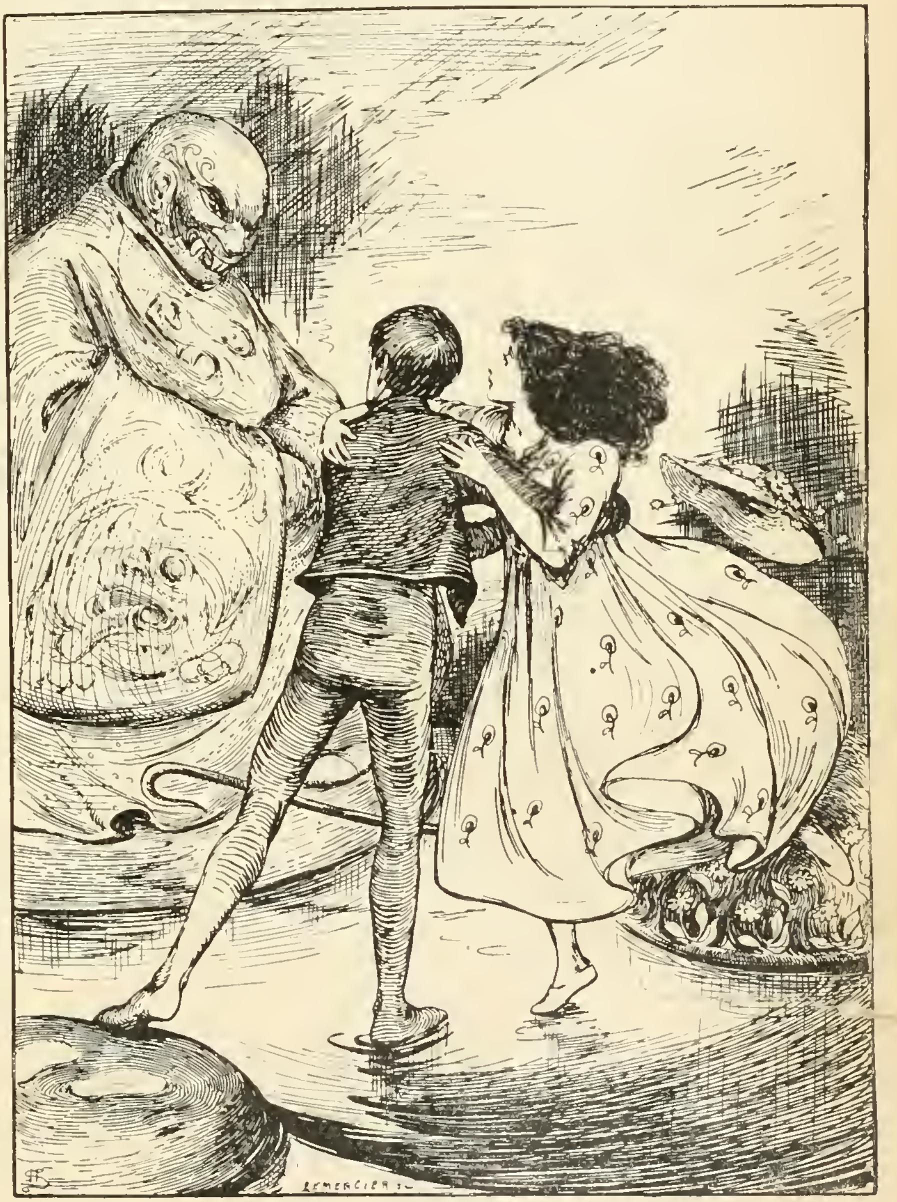
There he stood so elegantly with his ladder, and with a countenance as white and as rosy as a girl's—indeed, this was, properly speaking, a fault, for his face ought to have been rather black. He stood close to the shepherdess; they had both been placed where they stood; and having been so placed, they became betrothed to each other. They were well matched, being both young people, made of the same china, and equally fragile.

Close to them sat another figure, three times their size. He was an old Chinese, who could nod his head. He also was made of china, and pretended to be the grandfather of the little shepherdess; but this he could not prove. He maintained that he was entitled to control her, and, therefore, when General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-Sergeant asked for the little shepherdess's hand, he had nodded consent.

"You will obtain in him," said the old Chinese, "a husband whom I verily believe to be of mahogany. You will become the lady of General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-Sergeant! and he has a whole cupboardful of plate, to say nothing of what may be hid in the spring-drawers and secret compartments."

"I don't choose to live in the dark cupboard," said the little shepherdess. "I have heard say that he has eleven china wives in it already."

"Then you can become the twelfth!" said the Chinese. To-night, as soon as you hear a creaking in the old press, your wedding shall take place, as true as I'm a Chinese." And thereupon he nodded his head, and fell asleep.



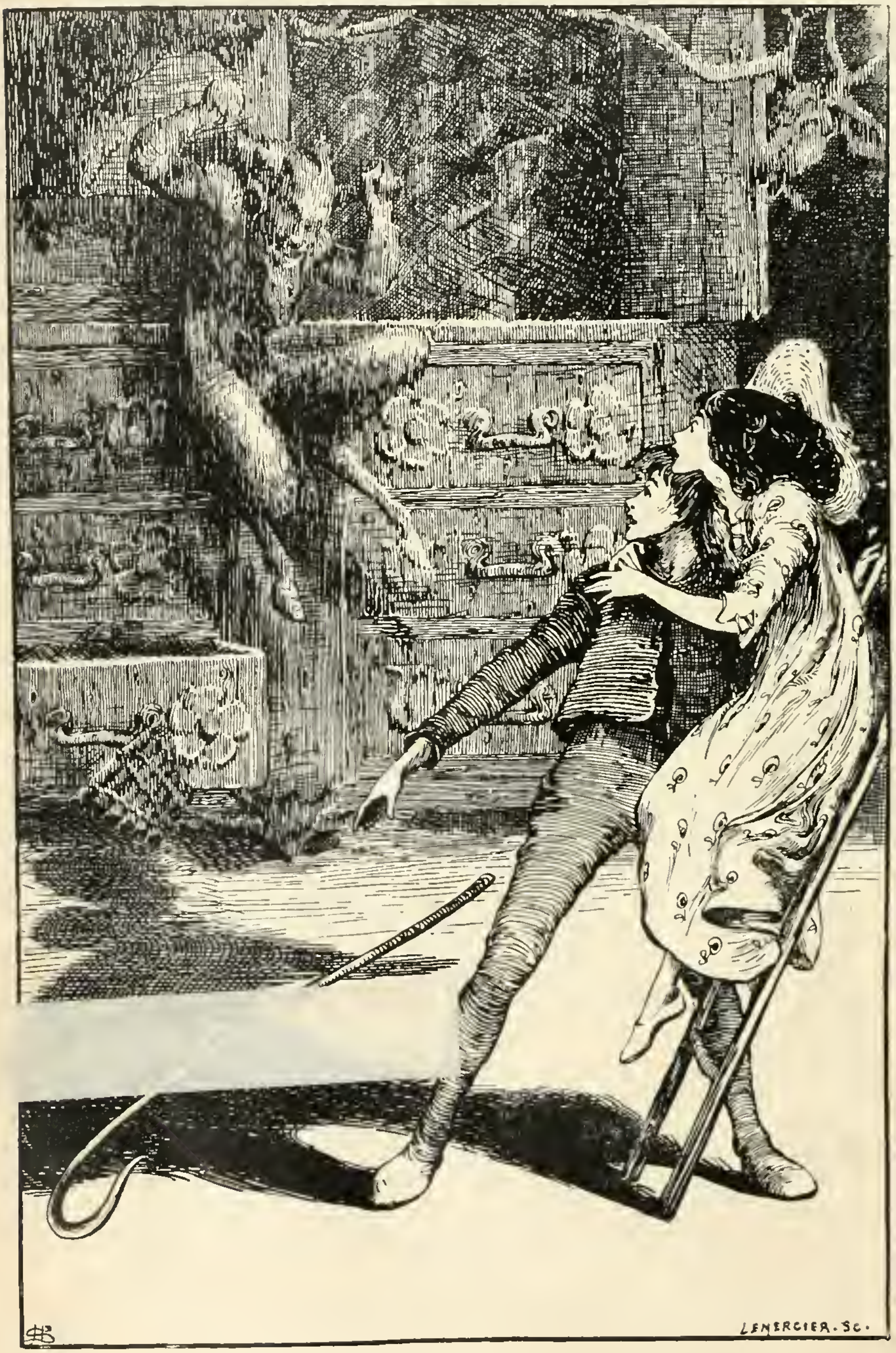
"I ENTREAT YOU TO GO WITH ME INTO THE WIDE WORLD."

But the little shepherdess cried, and looked at her sweetheart, the china chimney-sweeper.

"I entreat you," said she, "to go with me into the wide world, for we can't remain here."

"I will do anything you please," said the little chimney-sweeper; "let us set out immediately. I think I can maintain you with my profession."

"I wish we were but safe down from the table!" said she. "I shall not be easy till we are out in the wide world."


LEMERCIER. Sc.

THEY SAW THE OLD CUPBOARD WAS ALL IN AN UPROAR.

And he comforted her, and showed her how she might set her little foot on the carved projections and gilt foliage of the feet of the table; besides, he took his ladder to help, and so they managed to reach the floor. But when they looked towards the old cupboard, they saw it was all in an uproar. The carved stags poked out their heads, raised their antlers, and turned their necks. The General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandy-legs-Field-Sergeant was cutting tremendous capers, and bawling out to the Chinese: "They are running away! they are running away!"

The fugitives were somewhat frightened, and jumped into the drawer in the window-seat.

Here lay several packs of cards, that were not complete, and a little dolls' theatre, which had been built up as neatly as could be. A play was being represented, and all the queens, whether of hearts or diamonds, spades or clubs, sat in the front row, fanning themselves with their tulips; and behind them stood all the knaves, and showed that they had heads both upwards and downwards as playing-cards have. The play was about two lovers, who were not allowed to marry; and the shepherdess cried, for it seemed just like her own story.

"I cannot bear it," said she; "I must leave the drawer." But when they had reached the floor, and looked up at the table, there was the old Chinese awake, and shaking himself—and down he came on the floor like a lump.

"The old Chinese is coming!" shrieked the little shepherdess, falling on her china knee, for she was much affected.

"I have thought of a plan," said the chimney-sweeper. "Suppose we creep into the jar of perfumes that stands in the corner. There we might lie upon roses and lavender, and throw salt into his eyes if he comes near us."

"That would be of no use," said she. "Besides, I know that the old Chinese and the jar were formerly betrothed, and there always remains a degree of good-will when one has been on such terms. No! we have nothing for it but to go out into the wide world!"

"Have you really the courage to go out into the wide world with me?" asked the chimney-sweeper. "Have you reflected how large it is, and that we can never come back hither?"

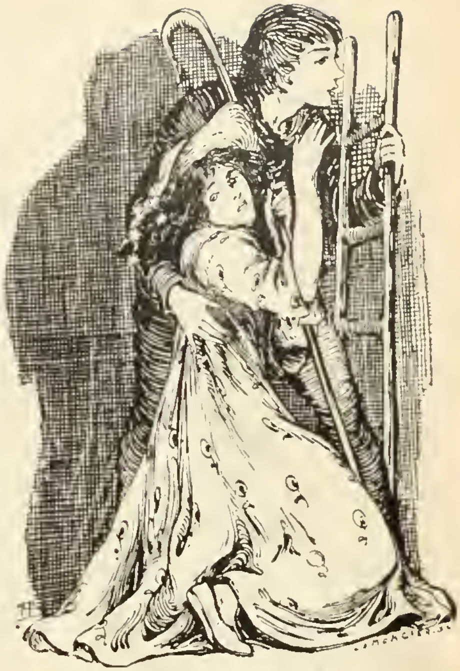
"I have," said she.

And the chimney-sweeper looked hard at her, and said: "My way lies through the chimney. Have you really the courage to go with me, not only through the stove itself, but to creep through the flue? We shall then come out by the chimney, and then I know how to manage. We shall climb so high that they won't be able to reach us, and quite at the top is a hole that leads out into the wide world."

And he led her to the door of the stove.

"It looks very black," said she; still, in she went with him, both through the stove and through the pipe, where it was as dark as pitch.

"Now we are in the chimney," said he; "and look! there shines the most beautiful star above!"



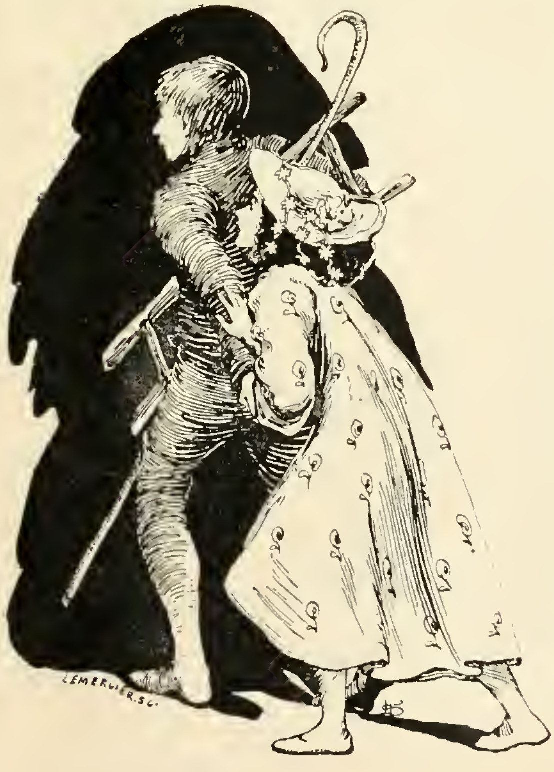
SHE FELL ON HER CHINA KNEE.

And it was a real star in the sky that seemed to shine down upon them as though it would light them on their way. And now they climbed and crept, and a frightful way it was—so steep and so high! But he went first, and smoothed it as much as he could; he held her, and showed her the best places to set her little china foot upon, and so they managed to reach the edge of the chimney-pot, on which they sat down—for they were vastly tired, as may be imagined.

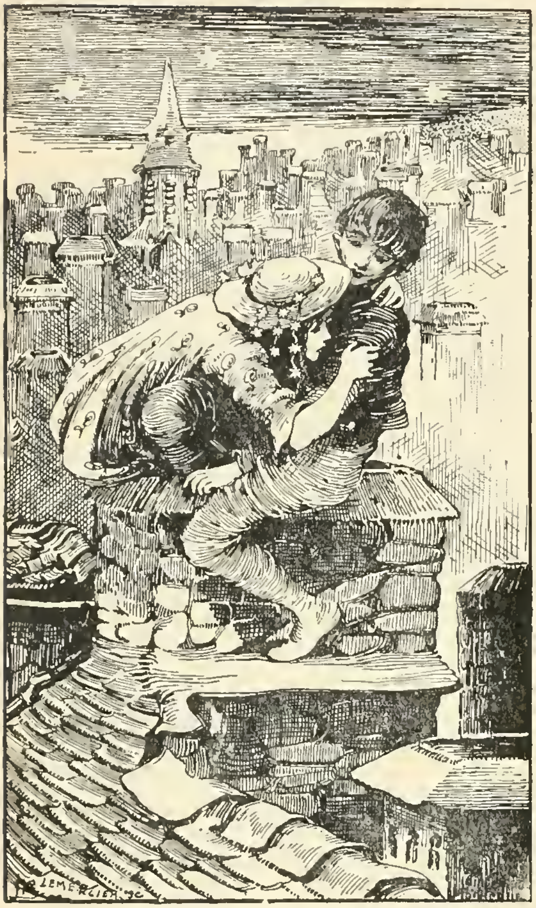
The sky and all its stars was above them, and all the roofs of the town lay below. They saw far around them, and a great way out into the wide world. It was not like what the poor shepherdess had fancied it. She leaned her little head on her chimney-sweeper's shoulder, and cried till she washed the gilding off her sash. "This is too much!" said she; "it is more than I can bear. The world is too large! I wish I were safe back on the table under the looking-glass. I shall never be happy till I am once more there. Now I have followed you into the wide world, you can accompany me back if you really love me."

Then the chimney-sweeper tried to reason with her, and spoke of the old Chinese, and of General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-Sergeant; but she sobbed so violently, and kissed her little chimney-sweeper, till he could not do otherwise than what she wished, foolish as it was.

And so they climbed down the chimney with infinite difficulty. They next crept through the flue and the stove, which were anything but pleasant places; and then they stood in the dark stove, and listened behind the door, to catch what might be



HE LED HER TO THE DOOR OF THE STOVE.



THE ROOFS OF THE TOWN LAY BELOW.

going forward in the room. All was quiet; so they peeped out—and behold! there lay the old Chinese sprawling in the middle of the floor. He had fallen down from the table, when he attempted to pursue them, and lay broken into three pieces: his whole back had come off in one lump, and his head had rolled into a corner. The General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-Sergeant stood where he always had done, and was wrapped in thought.

"This is shocking!" said the little shepherdess; "my old grandfather is broken in pieces, and by our fault! I shall not be able to survive such a mishap!" And so saying, she wrung her little hands.

"He can be rivetted!" said the chimney-sweeper —"he can be rivetted. Do not take on so! If they cement his back, and put a proper rivet through his neck, he will be just as good as new, and will be able to say as many disagreeable things to us as ever."

"Do you think so?" said she. And then they crept up to the table, where they formerly stood.

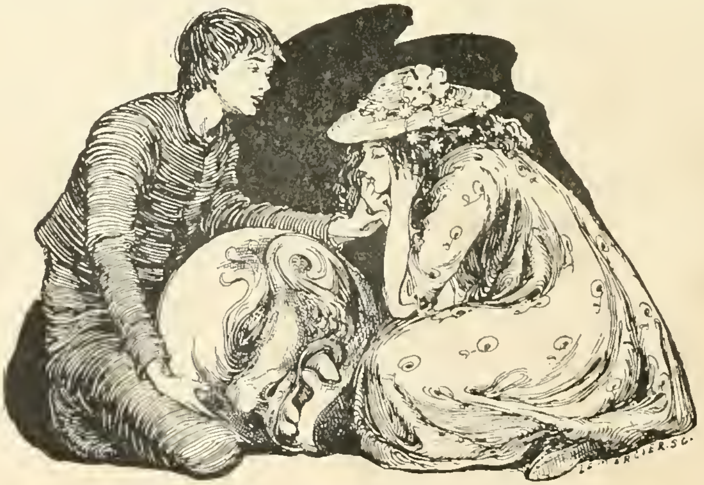
"Since we have got no farther than this," said the chimney-sweeper, "we might have saved ourselves a deal of trouble."

"I wish grandfather was rivetted," said the shepherdess; "I wonder if it costs much?"

And rivetted sure enough he was. The family had his back cemented, and an efficient rivet run through his neck. He was as good as new, except that he could no longer nod.

"You have become proud since you were broken to shivers," observed General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field Sergeant. "Methinks there is no reason why you should be so captious. Am I to have her or not?"

And the chimney-sweeper and the little shepherdess looked most touchingly at the old Chinese. They were afraid he would nod. But he could not; and it would have been derogatory to have confessed to a stranger that he had a rivet in his neck. And so the china couple remained together, and blessed the grandfather's rivet, and loved each other till they were broken to pieces.


LEMERCIER SC.

HIS HEAD HAD ROLLED INTO A CORNER.

The Nightingale

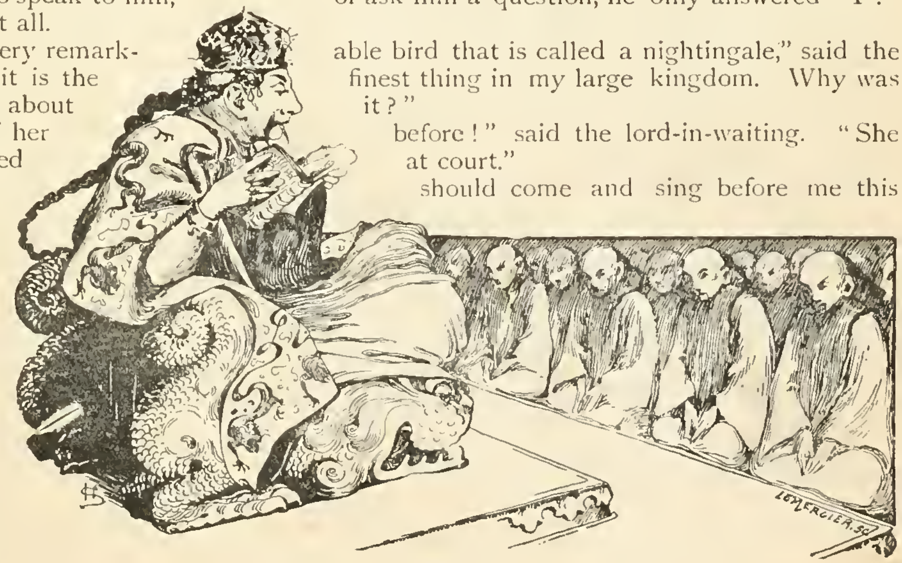
IN China, you know, the emperor is a Chinese, and all those about him are Chinamen. It is now many years ago—but for that very reason the story is better worth hearing before it is quite forgotten—the emperor's palace was the most magnificent in the whole world; it was built entirely of the finest porcelain, and was costly to a degree, but so brittle and so ticklish, that one scarcely dared to touch it. In the garden might be seen the most singular flowers, and to the most beautiful of these were fastened little silver bells that kept jingling, so that one could not pass by without observing them. Everything in the emperor's garden was calculated after the same fashion. The garden itself extended so far that even the gardener did not know where it ended. If one went beyond its limits, one reached the finest forest with lofty trees and deep lakes. The forest sloped down to the deep blue sea: large ships could sail under its branches, in one of which dwelt a nightingale that sang so sweetly, that even the poor fishermen, who had something else to do, were fain to stand still and listen, whenever they heard her, as they went to spread their nets over-night. "Oh dear, how beautiful!" said they; and then they were forced to attend to their business, and forget the bird. Yet, if the bird happened to sing again on the following night, and any one of the fishermen came near the spot, he was sure to say to himself: "Dear me, how beautiful that is, to be sure!"

Travellers flocked from all parts of the earth to the emperor's capital, and admired it, as well as the palace and the garden. Yet when they came to hear the nightingale, they all declared: "This is better still."

And the travellers, on their return home, related what they had seen, and learned men wrote many volumes upon the town, the palace, and the garden. Nor did they forget the nightingale, which was reckoned the most remarkable of all; and those who could write poetry penned the most beautiful verses about the nightingale in the forest near the lake.

The books circulated through the world, and some of them fell into the emperor's hands. He sat on his golden throne, and kept reading and reading, and nodding his head every moment, for he was delighted with the beautiful descriptions of the town, the palace, and the garden. "But the nightingale is the most lovely of all!" said the book.

"What is that?" said the emperor. "I don't know of any nightingale! Can there be such a bird in my empire, and in my very garden, without my having ever heard of it? Must one learn such things from books?"



SAT ON HIS GOLDEN THRONE READING THE BOOK.

He then called his lord-in-waiting, who was so grand a personage, that if any one of inferior rank to himself dared to speak to him, or ask him a question, he only answered "P!" which meant nothing at all.

"This must be a very remarkable bird that is called a nightingale," said the emperor. "They say it is the finest thing in my large kingdom. Why was I never told anything about it?"

"I never heard of her before!" said the lord-in-waiting. "She has never been presented at court."

"I choose that she should come and sing before me this very evening," said the emperor. "The whole world knows what I possess, while I myself do not!"

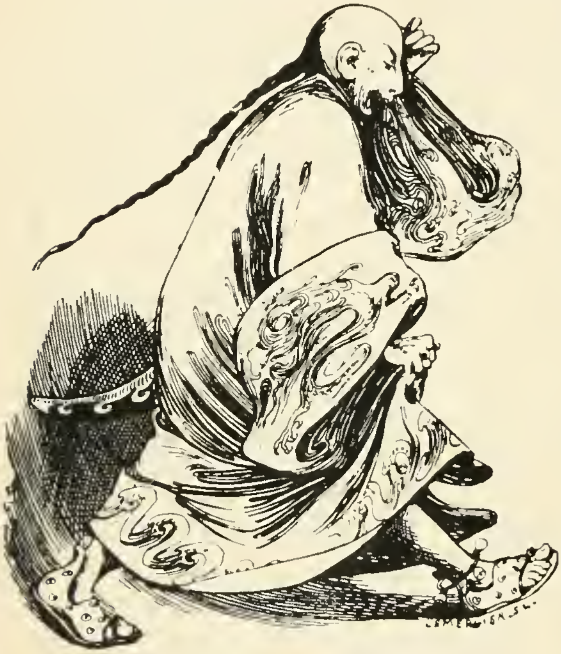
"I never heard her mentioned before," repeated the lord-in-waiting; "but I will seek for her and find her."

But where was she to be found? The lord-in-waiting ran up and down all the stairs in the palace, looked through all the rooms and passages, but none of those whom he met had ever heard of the nightingale. So the lord-in-waiting returned to the emperor, and said that it must be a mere fiction invented by those who wrote the books. "Your imperial majesty is not to believe all that is written," said he; "these are mere poetical fancies, and what is called the black art."

"But the book in which I read this," said the emperor, "was sent to me by the high-potent Emperor of Japan, and therefore it cannot contain a falsehood. I will hear the nightingale! She must come hither this evening. She enjoys my gracious favour. And if she does not come, the whole court shall have their bodies trampled upon the moment supper is over."

"Tsing-pe!" said the lord-in-waiting, and he again ran up and down all the stairs, and looked through all the rooms and passages, and half of the courtiers accompanied him in his search, for they did not relish the thoughts of being trampled upon. And there was a mighty inquiry after the wonderful nightingale, which all the world knew of, except those who resided at court.

At last they found a little girl in the kitchen, who said: "Oh dear! I know the nightingale well enough, and beautifully she sings! I have leave to take home to my poor sick mother the remains of the dinner-table; and she lives down by the shore, and when I come back and am tired, and sit down to rest in the forest, then I hear the nightingale sing. And the tears come into my eyes, and it is just as if my mother kissed me."



RAN UP AND DOWN, AND LOOKED THROUGH ALL THE ROOMS.

"Little cook," said the lord-in-waiting, "I will obtain for you a lasting situation in the kitchen, and the permission to see the emperor dine, if you will show us the way to the nightingale, for she is bespoken for this evening."

And so they all went out into the forest, where the nightingale used to sing. Half the court was there. As they walked along, a cow began lowing.

"Oh," cried some of the young lords of the court, "now we've found her! What wonderful strength for so small an animal! I have certainly heard this before!"

"Nay, those are cows a-bellowing," said the little cook. "We are at a good distance yet from the spot."

The frogs now began to croak in a neighbouring marsh.

"Magnificent!" said the Chinese court-preacher; "now I hear her—it sounds like little church bells."

"Nay, those are frogs," said the little cook; "but I think that we shall soon hear her now."

The nightingale then began to sing.

"There she is," said the little girl. "Hark! hark! and there she sits," added she, pointing to a little grey bird up in the boughs.

"Is it possible?" said the lord-in-waiting. "I should never have fancied her like that! How simple she looks! She has certainly lost her colour at seeing so many persons of rank around her."

"Little nightingale," cried the little cook aloud, "our most gracious emperor wishes you to sing before him."

"With the greatest pleasure!" said the nightingale, and sang so exquisitely, that it was a delight to hear her.

"It sounds like glass bells," said the lord-in-waiting; "and look how her little throat is working! It is surprising that we never heard her before! She will have great success at court."

"Shall I sing once more before the emperor?" asked the nightingale, who thought the emperor was there.

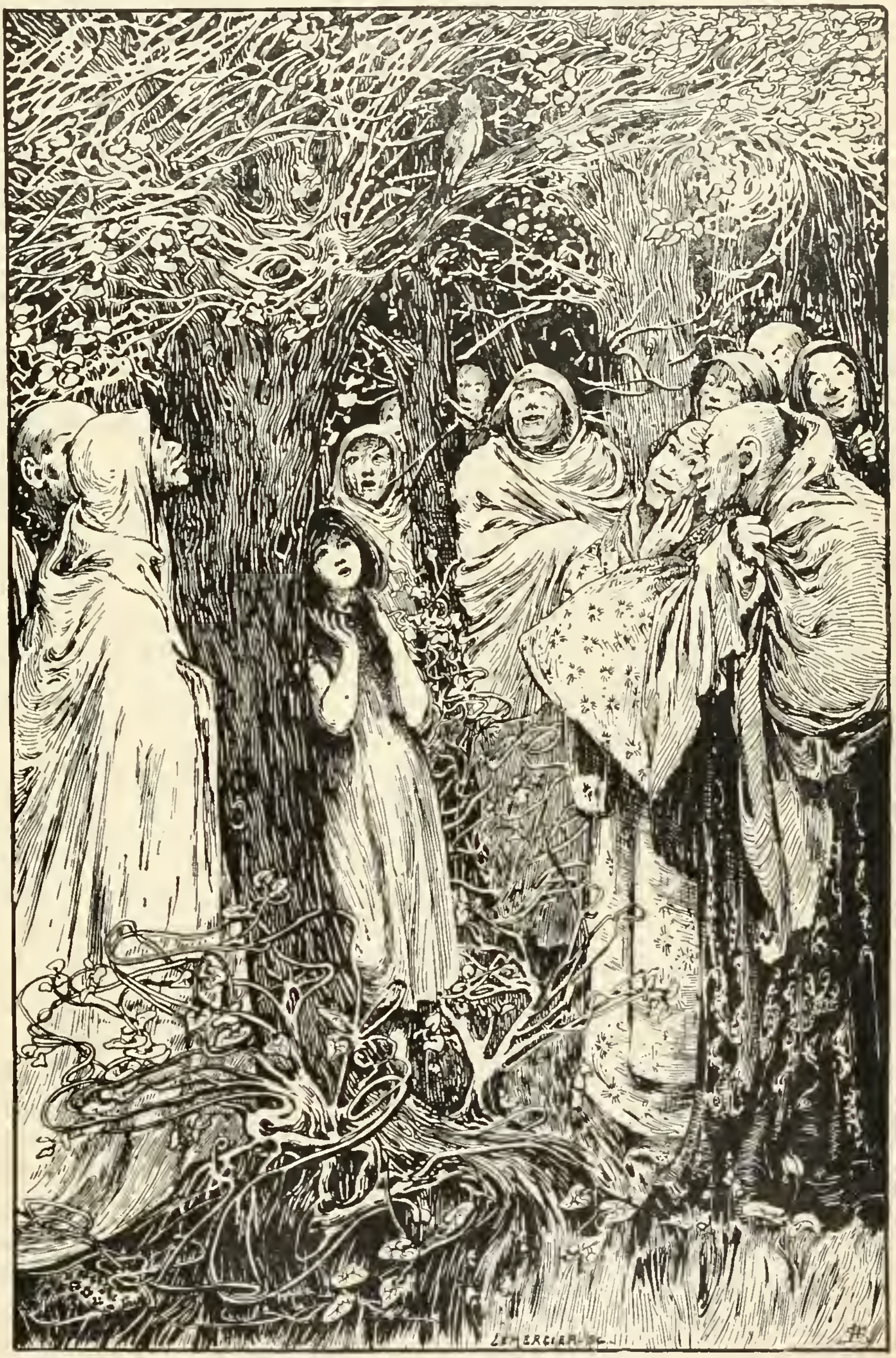
"My sweet little nightingale," said the lord-in-waiting, "I have the pleasure to invite you to a court assembly for this evening, at which you will enchant his Imperial Highness with your delightful singing."

"It is best when heard in the greenwood," said the nightingale; still she went willingly, on hearing the emperor wished it.

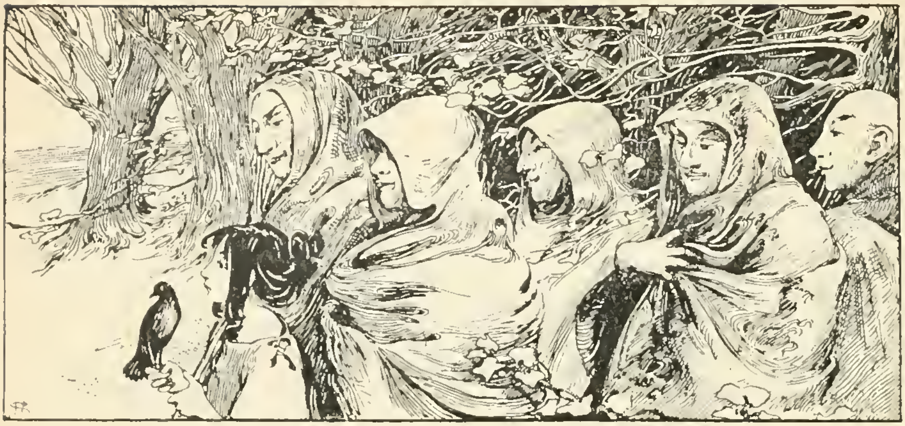
The preparations in the palace were magnificent. The walls and the floor, both of porcelain, were shining in the light of several thousand golden lamps; the rarest flowers, such as had a right to ring their bells, were placed in the passages. What with the running to and fro, and the draught, there was such a jingling of bells that one could scarcely hear one's self speak.

In the middle of the state room, where the emperor sat, there was a golden perch for the nightingale. The whole court was present, and the little cook had leave to stand behind the door, as she had now obtained the title of a real court cook. All present were dressed in their best, and all eyes were turned towards the little grey bird, to whom the emperor now made a sign by nodding his head.

And the nightingale sang so exquisitely, that tears came into the emperor's eyes. The tears rolled down his cheeks, and then the nightingale sang in still more touching strains, that went to one's very heart. And the emperor was so enchanted, that he declared the nightingale should have his golden slipper to wear round her neck. But the nightingale declined the honour with thanks; she was sufficiently rewarded already. "I have seen tears in the emperor's eyes, and these are like the richest treasure to me. An emperor's tears possess a peculiar virtue! God knows that I am sufficiently rewarded." And thereupon she sang again in her sweet, melodious voice.


LEMERCIER SC.

THE NIGHTINGALE SANG EXQUISITELY.



SHE WENT WILLINGLY, ON HEARING THE EMPEROR WISHED IT.

"This is the prettiest piece of coquetry that I know of," said the ladies present; and they put water into their mouths, to make a kind of liquid, clucking sound when anybody spoke to them. They then fancied themselves nightingales. Even the footmen and the chambermaids gave out that they were satisfied with the performance: and that is saying a great deal, for they are the most fastidious to please. In short, the nightingale's success was complete.

She was now invited to take up her abode at court, where she was to have her own cage, besides the liberty of going out twice a day, and once in the night, on which occasions she was attended by twelve servants, each of whom had fastened a ribbon round her leg to hold her fast. There was no pleasure to be had in flying after such a fashion as that.

The whole talk of the town ran on no other subject than the wonderful bird. Eleven old-clothes-men's children were christened after her, but not one of them had a note in their throat.

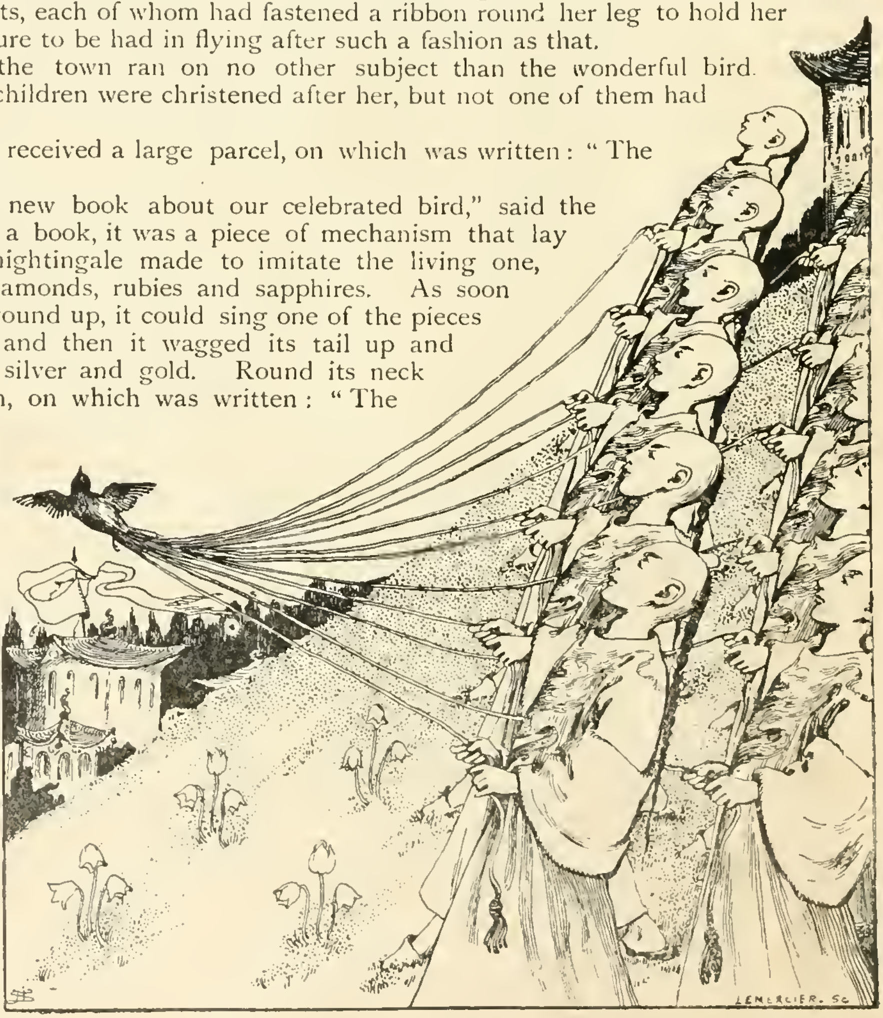
One day the emperor received a large parcel, on which was written: "The Nightingale."

"Here's no doubt a new book about our celebrated bird," said the emperor. But instead of a book, it was a piece of mechanism that lay in a box—an artificial nightingale made to imitate the living one, only set all over with diamonds, rubies and sapphires. As soon as the artificial bird was wound up, it could sing one of the pieces that the real one sang; and then it wagged its tail up and down, all sparkling with silver and gold. Round its neck was slung a little ribbon, on which was written: "The Emperor of Japan's nightingale is poor indeed compared to that belonging to the Emperor of China."

"This is splendid," said all present, while he who had brought the bird was immediately invested with the title of Imperial Chief Nightingale-bringer.

"Now they must sing together," said the courtiers, "and what a duet that will be!"

And they were accordingly set to sing together. But it did not do, for the real nightingale sang after her fashion, and the artificial bird according



EACH HAD FASTENED A RIBBON ROUND HER LEG.

to the barrel. "It is not the fault of the latter," observed the musical conductor, "for the bird is a good timeist, quite after my school." So the artificial bird was made to sing alone. It obtained just as much success as the real bird, and then it was thought so much prettier to look at, for it sparkled like bracelets and breast-pins.

Three-and-thirty times did it sing the same piece without being tired. The company would willingly have heard it anew, but the emperor said that it was time the living nightingale should take her turn. But where was she? Nobody had remarked that she had flown out at the open window and back to her green woods.

"How comes this?" said the emperor. And all the courtiers blamed her, and set down the nightingale for a most ungrateful animal.

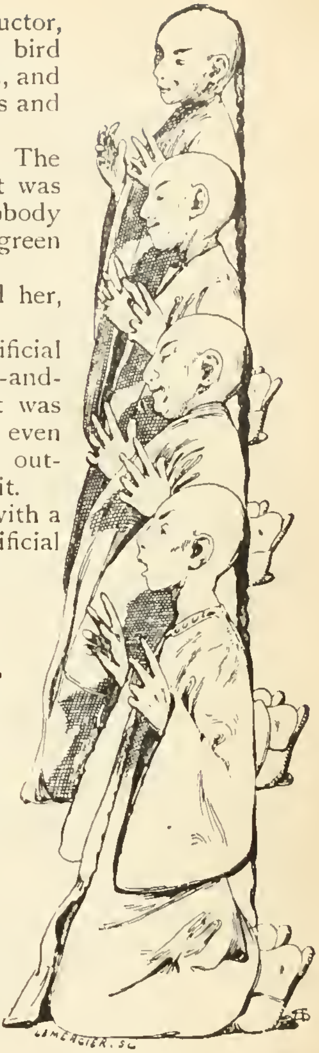
"But we have the best bird left," said they; and accordingly the artificial bird was made to sing again, and they heard the same tune for the four-and-thirtieth time. Only they had not yet learned it by heart completely, for it was difficult to catch. And the conductor praised the bird to the skies, and even maintained that it was superior to a real nightingale, not only as regards outward appearance and the profusion of diamonds, but in point of intrinsic merit.

"For you perceive, my gracious lord and emperor of us all," said he, "with a real nightingale you can never depend on what is coming; but with an artificial bird all is laid out beforehand. One can analyze it, one can open it, and show the human skill that contrived its mechanism, and how the barrels lie, how they work, and how one thing proceeds from another."

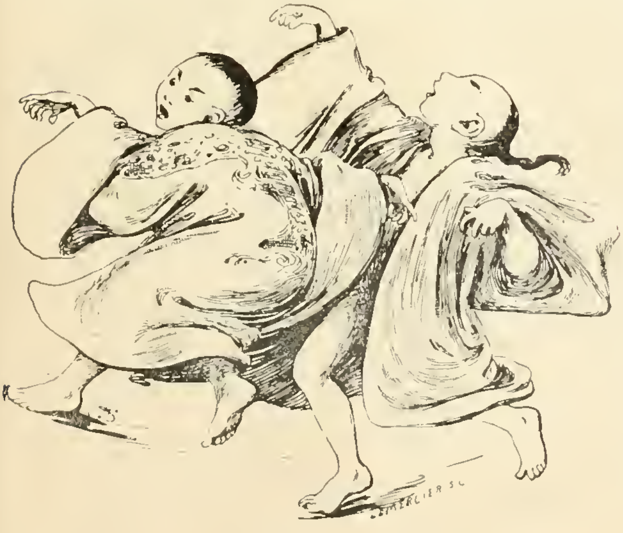
"Those are quite my own thoughts," said all present; and the musical conductor was allowed to exhibit the bird to the people on the following Sunday. And the emperor commanded that the people should likewise hear it sing. They accordingly heard it, and were as delighted as though they had got drunk with tea, for it was so thoroughly Chinese. And they all cried out "Oh!" and held up their forefingers, and nodded their heads. But the poor fisherman, who had heard the real nightingale, said: "It sounds prettily enough, and the melodies are all alike; but there's a something wanting, though I can't tell what."

The real nightingale was banished from the land.

The artificial bird was placed on a silk cushion beside the emperor's bed. All the presents of gold and precious stones which had been showered upon it lay around, and the bird had risen to the title of Imperial Toilet-singer, and to the rank of number one on the left side. For the emperor reckoned the left side the noblest, as being the seat of the heart; for an emperor's heart is on the left, just as other people's are. And the conductor of the music wrote a work in twenty-five volumes about the artificial bird, which was so learned, and so long, and so full of the hardest Chinese words, that everybody said they had read it and understood it, for fear of being thought stupid, or being trampled to death.



ALL CRIED OUT "OH!"

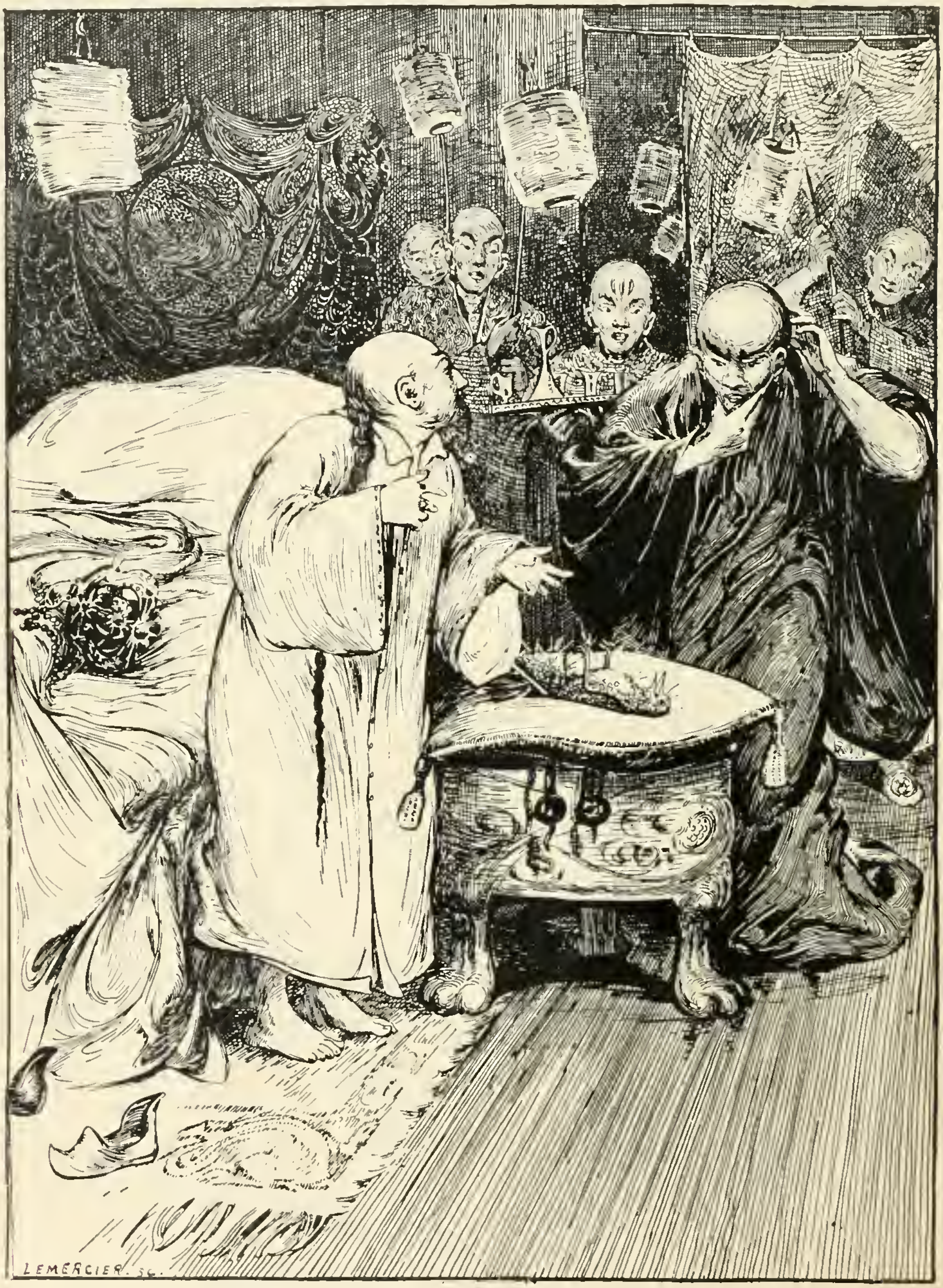


THE BOYS IN THE STREET WOULD GO ABOUT SINGING.

A whole year passed by. The emperor and his court, and all other Chinese, now knew by heart every little flourish in the artificial bird's song. But that was the very reason why it pleased them better than ever, because they could now sing with the bird—which they accordingly did. The boys in the street would go about singing "Zi-zi-zi—cluck-cluck — cooo-oo"; and the emperor sang it likewise. It was really quite delightful!

But one evening, when the artificial bird was singing its best, and the emperor lay in bed listening, something inside the bird seemed to say "crick!" Then a spring flew—whirr-r-r-r! All the wheels ran round, and suddenly the music came to a standstill.

The emperor jumped out of bed and called for his physician. But of what use could he be?


LEMERCIER. SC.

JUMPED OUT OF BED AND CALLED FOR HIS PHYSICIAN.

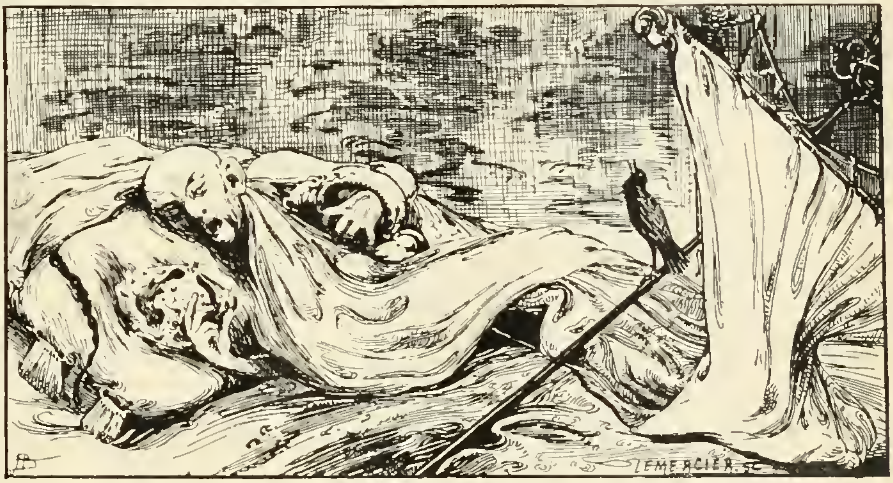
They next fetched a watchmaker, and after a deal of talking and examination, he managed to set the bird in order to a certain degree; but he said it must be used sparingly, for the uvula was worn away, and it was impossible to put in a new one so as to be sure not to injure the music.

Here was a cause for deep mourning! The artificial bird was now only to be heard once a year, and that was almost too often for its safety. But the conductor of the music made a speech, consisting of very hard words, in order to prove that it was just as good as ever; and so, of course, it was considered.

Five years had now flown past, when a real affliction threatened the land. The Chinese all loved their emperor, and he now lay so ill that it was said he could not recover. A new emperor was already chosen; and the people who stood outside in the street asked the lord-in-waiting how it fared with their old emperor? "P!" said he, shaking his head.

The emperor lay pale and cold in his fine large bed. The whole court thought he was dead, and everybody had run away from him to pay their respects to the new emperor. The valets had run away to prate about the event, and the chambermaids had a large company to coffee. Cloth coverings had been laid down in all the rooms and passages, that nobody's step might be heard, and therefore all was silent as the grave. But the emperor was not yet dead, though he lay stiff and pale in his magnificent bed, with its long velvet curtains and heavy gold tassels. High above was an open window, through which the moon shone down upon the emperor and the artificial bird.

The poor emperor could scarcely breathe; he felt as if a weight were lying on his chest, and on opening his eyes he saw that it was Death who was sitting on his breast, and had put on his gold crown, and was holding the imperial sword in one hand and his beautiful banner in the other. Strange heads were peeping out on all sides through the velvet bed-curtains, some of which were quite ugly, while others were mild and lovely. These were the emperor's good and bad actions, which looked him in the face now that Death was at his heart.



SHE SANG, AND THE EMPEROR FELL INTO A SWEET SLEEP.

"Do you remember this?" whispered one after another. "Do you remember that?" And they told him so many things that the perspiration stood on his brow.

"I never knew it," said the emperor. "Music! music!—the large Chinese drum!" cried he, "to drown what they say!"

But they went on, and Death nodded to all they said, like a true Chinese.

"Music! music!" vociferated the emperor. "You little charming golden bird, sing away!—sing, can't you? I have given you gold and precious stones, and I have even hung my golden slipper round your neck. Sing, I tell you, sing!"

But the bird remained silent. There was nobody there to wind it up, and without that it could not sing a note. And Death went on staring at the emperor with his hollow sockets, and a frightful stillness reigned around.

Suddenly a gust of melody sounded through the window. It proceeded from the little living nightingale who sat on a bough. She had heard of her emperor's danger, and had hastened hither to sing hope and comfort to his soul. And as she sang, the phantoms grew fainter and fainter, while the blood began to circulate faster and faster through the emperor's weak limbs, and even Death listened, and said, "Go on, little nightingale, go on."

"But will you give me that costly golden sword? Will you give me that rich banner? Will you give me the emperor's crown?"

And Death gave each of the baubles for a song, and the nightingale continued singing. She sang of the quiet churchyard, where the white roses blossom, where the elder sheds its perfumes, and where the cool grass is moistened by the tears of the survivors. Then Death longed to go to his garden, and he floated out through the window, like a cold, white mist.

"Thanks! thanks!" said the emperor, "you heavenly little bird! I know you well. I banished you from my dominions, and yet have you sung away those evil faces from my bedside, and expelled Death from my heart. How can I reward you?"

"You have rewarded me," said the nightingale. "I beguiled tears from your eyes the first time I sang—I shall never forget that! Those are the jewels that rejoice a singer's heart. But now sleep and grow strong and healthy. I will sing to you."

And she sang, and the emperor fell into a sweet sleep. And most mild and beneficent was that slumber.

The sun was shining through the window when he awoke, refreshed and restored to health. None of his servants had returned, for they thought he was dead; but the nightingale still sat and sang.

"You must always remain with me," said the emperor. "You shall only sing when you choose, and I will break the artificial bird into a thousand pieces."

"Do not do that," said the nightingale; "the bird did good as long as it could. Keep it as before. I cannot build my nest and live in the palace, but let me come when I have a mind, and I will sit on the bough near the window of an evening and sing to you, that you may be at once glad and thoughtful. I will sing of the happy, and of those who suffer. I will tell of the bad and the good that is concealed from you by those about your person. For the little songster flies far around to the poor fishermen, and to the peasants' humble roof, and to all who live at so great a distance from yourself and your court. I love your heart better than your crown, and yet the crown has a perfume of sacredness about it too. I will come and sing to you, but you must promise me one thing."

"All I possess!" said the emperor, as he stood in his imperial robes, which he had himself put on, and pressed his sword of weighty gold to his heart.

"One thing only I require of you: that is, to let no one know you have a little bird who tells you everything, and all will be for the best." And away the nightingale flew.

The servants came in to look after their late emperor. . . . When there, they stood in amazement on hearing the emperor say "Good morning!"

* * *

The Garden of Paradise

THE FOUR WINDS

THERE once lived a king's son, who possessed a larger and more beautiful collection of books than anybody ever had before. He could read in their pages all the events that had ever taken place in the world, and see them illustrated by the most exquisite engravings. He could obtain information about any people or any country, only not a word could he ever find as to the geographical position of the Garden of the World; and this was just what he was most desirous of ascertaining.

His grandmother had told him, when he was quite a little boy, and beginning to go to school, that each flower in the Garden of the World was the most delicious cake, and had its stamina filled with luscious wine; on one stood written historical facts, on another geography or arithmetical tables — and so one need only eat cakes to learn one's lesson, and the more one ate, the more history, geography, and arithmetic one acquired.

He used to believe this. But when he grew a little older, and had learned more and become wiser, he began to understand that there must be better delights than these in the Garden of the World.

He was now seventeen, and nothing ran in his head but this garden.

One day he went to take a walk in the forest, all alone, as he best liked to be.

As evening came on, the sky grew overcast, and there came on such a shower, that it seemed as if the heavens had become one vast sluice that kept pouring down water; besides this, it was darker than it usually is, even at night, except at the bottom of the deepest well. At every step, he either slipped on the wet grass, or stumbled over some bare rock. Everything was dripping wet, and the poor prince had not a dry thread about him. He was obliged to climb over huge blocks of stone, where water was running down from the thick moss. He was near fainting away, when he heard a singular rushing noise, and perceived a large cavern, lighted up by a huge fire, piled up in the middle, and fit to roast a whole deer. And this, indeed, was being done. A very fine deer, with its branching horns, was placed on a spit, and slowly turned round between the felled trunks of two pine-trees. An elderly woman, as bony and masculine as though she were a man in female attire, sat by the fire, and kept throwing in one log of wood after another.

"Come nearer," said she, "and sit by the fire, and dry your clothes."

"There is a great draught here," observed the prince, sitting down on the ground.

"It will be much worse when my sons come home," returned the woman. "You are in the Cavern of the Winds. My sons are the Four Winds of Heaven—can you understand that?"

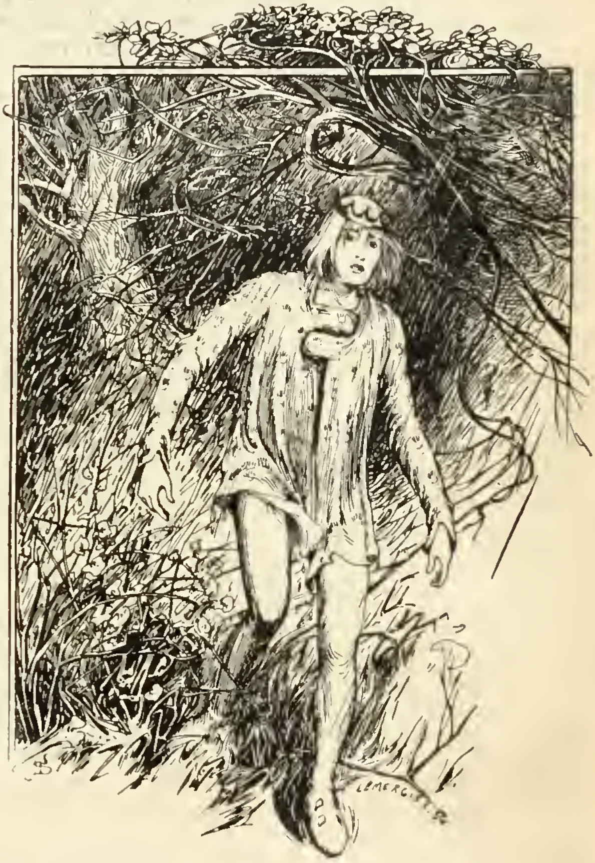
"Where are your sons?" asked the prince.

"It is difficult to answer a silly question," said the woman. "My sons are now at it, with their own hands. They are playing at shuttlecock with the clouds, up there in the King's hall." And she pointed above.

"Oh, that's it!" quoth the prince. "But you seem to speak rather harshly, and are not as gentle as the women I am accustomed to see."

"Because they have nothing else to do. But I must be harsh, to keep my boys in any order; which I manage to do, headstrong as they are. You see those four bags hanging on the wall? Well, they are every bit as much afraid of them as you used to be of the rod behind the looking-glass. I bend the boys in two, I can tell you, and then pop them into the bag, without their making the least resistance. There they stay, and don't dare come out till I think it proper they should. But here comes one of them."

It was the North Wind who came in, diffusing an icy coldness around. Large hailstones jumped about on the floor, and snow-flakes were scattered in all directions. He wore a bearskin jacket and clothes; his cap of sea-dog's skin came down over his ears; long icicles clung to his beard, and one hailstone after another fell from the collar of his jacket.



AT EVERY STEP HE SLIPPED ON THE WET GRASS.

"Don't go too near the fire at once," said the prince, "or your face and hands might easily get frozen."

"Frozen, quotha!" said the North Wind, with a loud laugh. "Why, cold is my greatest delight! But what kind of little snip are you? How did you come into the Cavern of the Winds?"

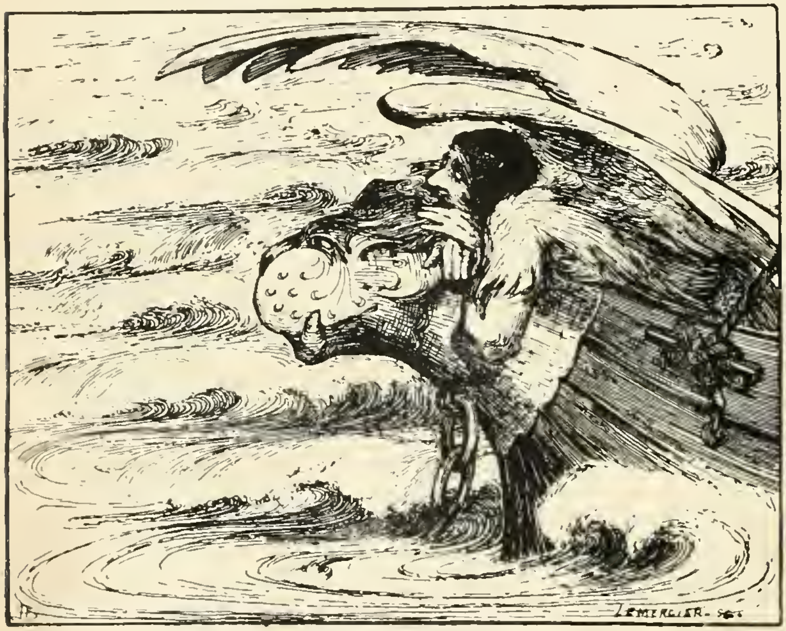
"He is my guest," said the old woman; "and if that does not satisfy you, why, you need only get into the bag. Do you understand me now?"

Well, this did the business at once; and the North Wind then began to relate whence he came, and where he had been staying for nearly a month past.

"I come from the Arctic Sea," said he, "and I have been on Bear's Island, with the Russian sea-cow hunters. I sat and slept at the helm, as they sailed away from the North Cape; but whenever I happened to wake, the petrels were flying about my legs. What comical birds they are! They will flap their wings suddenly, and then remain poised upon them, and quite motionless, as if they had had enough of flying."

"Don't be so diffuse," said the mother of the Winds. "And so you reached Bear's Island?"

"It's a beautiful place! There's a ball-room floor for you, as smooth as a plate! Heaps of half-thawed snow, slightly covered with moss, sharp stones, and skeletons of sea-cows and bears were lying about, together with the arms and legs of giants in a state of green decay. It looks as if the sun had never shone there. I blew slightly on the mist, that the hovels might be visible, and there appeared a hut, built from the remains of a ship that had been wrecked, and covered over with sea-cows' skins. The fleshy side was turned outwards, and it was both red and green. A living bear sat growling on the roof. I went to the shore, and looked after birds' nests, and saw the unfledged youngsters opening their beaks and screaming lustily; so I blew into their thousands of throats, and they learned to shut their mouths. A little farther on, the sea-cows were rolling about like giant worms with pigs' heads, and teeth a yard long."


LEMERCIER-SC.

"I SAT AND SLEPT AT THE HELM."

"You tell your adventures right pleasantly, my son," said his mother; "it makes my mouth water to hear you."

"Then the hunting began. The harpoon was flung right into the sea-cow's chest, so that a smoking jet of blood spurted forth like water from a fountain, and besprinkled the ice. Then I thought of my part of the game. I began to blow, and set my vessels, the towering icebergs, to stick the boats fast. Oh! what a whistling and a bawling there was! Only I whistled louder than all of them. They were obliged to unpack the dead sea-cows, the chests, and the tackle upon the ice; I then shook snowflakes over them, and left them and their spoils to sail in their pent-up vessels towards the south, to drink salt-water. They will never return to Bear's Island."

"Then you have done mischief?" said the mother of the Winds.

"Let others tell of the good I may have done!" said he. "But here comes my brother from the West. I like him the best, because he smacks of the sea, and brings a nice bracing cold with him."

"Is that the little Zephyr?" asked the prince.

"Yes, that is the Zephyr!" said the old woman; "but he's not so very little either. Some years ago he was a pretty boy; but that is now over."

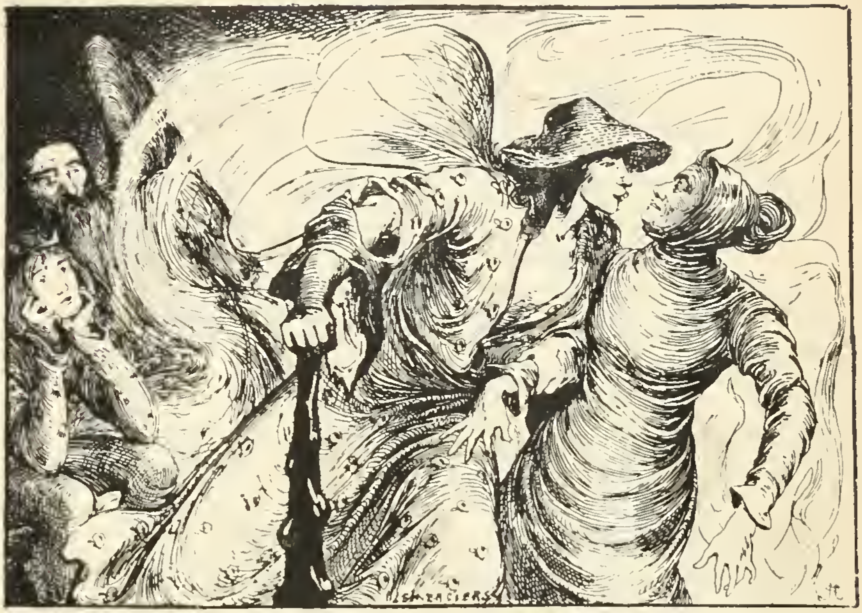
He looked like a wild man; but he wore a roller round his head, that he might not get hurt. In his hand he held a mahogany club, hewn from an American mahogany forest. It was no small weight to carry.

"Whence do you come?" asked the mother.

"From the wild forests," said he, "where tangled bindweed forms a hedge between each tree, where water-snakes lie in the damp grass, and where man seems to be a superfluous nonentity."

"What have you been doing there?"

"I looked into the deep river, and saw it had rushed down from the rocks, and then became dust, and flew towards the clouds to support the rainbow. I saw a wild buffalo swimming in the river, but he was carried away by the tide. He had joined a flock of wild ducks, who flew up into the air the moment the waters dashed downwards. The buffalo was obliged to be hurled into the precipice. This pleased me, and I raised a storm, so that the oldest trees sailed down the river, and were reduced to splinters."



HE KISSED HIS MOTHER SO ROUGHLY, THAT SHE NEARLY FELL BACKWARDS.

"And was that **all** you did?" asked the old woman.

"I cut capers in the savannahs; I stroked wild horses, and shook cocoanut trees. Oh! I have plenty of tales to tell! Only one must not tell all one knows, as you well know, good mammy." And he kissed his mother so roughly, that she had nearly fallen backwards. He was a shocking wild lad.

Now, in came the South Wind in a turban and Bedouin's flying mantle.

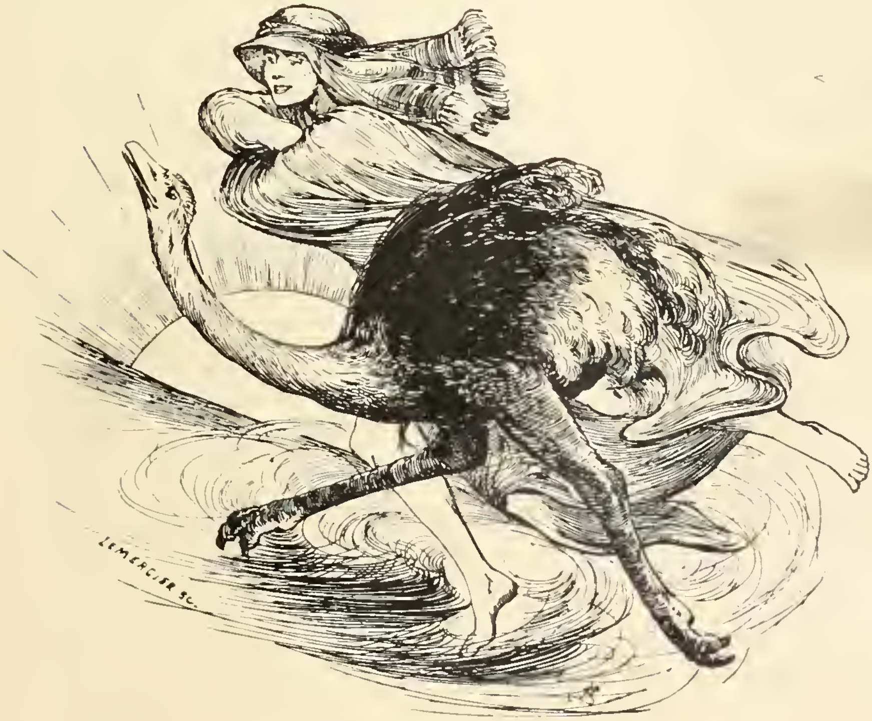
"It is very cold hereabouts!" said he, throwing wood upon the fire. "It is easy to perceive that the North Wind has preceded me."

"It is hot enough here to roast a northern bear!" said the North Wind.

"You are a bear yourself!" answered the South Wind.

"Have you a mind to be both put into the bag?" asked the old woman. "There! sit down on that stone, and tell us where you have been."

"In Africa, mother," returned he. "I was amongst the Hottentots, who were lion-hunting in Caffraria. The grass in their plains looks as green as an olive. An ostrich ran a race with me, but I beat him hollow. I reached the yellow sands of the desert, which lool like the bottom of the s [illegible] I met a caravan. Th [illegible] killed their last came [illegible] obtain some water, [illegible] scorching beneath [illegible] feet. The desert stre [illegible] out into boundless ex [illegible] I then rolled in the fine, loose sand, and made it whirl about in large columns. A fine dance I led it! You should have seen how dejected the dromedaries looked as they stood stock still, and how the merchants pulled their caftans over their heads. They threw themselves on the ground before me as they would before Allah, their God They are now all buried



"AN OSTRICH RAN A RACE WITH ME."

beneath a pyramid of sand; and when I come to puff it away, the sun will bleach their bones, and travellers will see that others have been there before them: a fact which is seldom believed in the desert, short of some tangible proof."

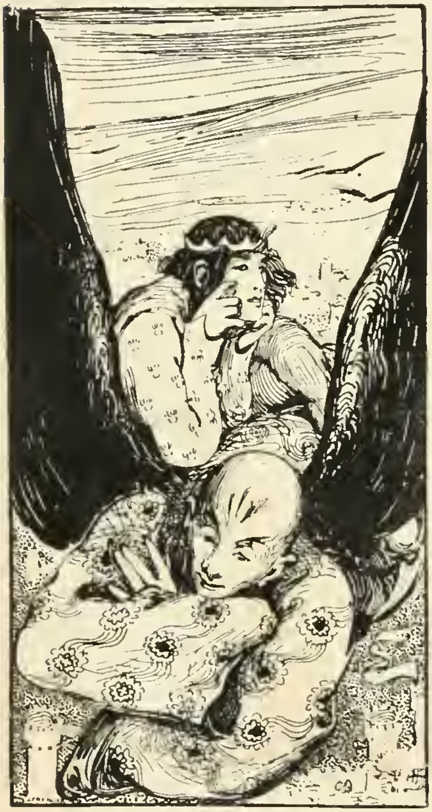
"Then you have done nothing but mischief!" said his mother. "Into the bag with you!" And before he had time to perceive it, she had taken the South Wind round the waist, and popped him into the bag. He wriggled about on the ground; but she sat upon him, and then he was forced to lie still.

"Your sons are a set of lively boys!" said the prince.

"Yes," answered she; "and I know how to correct them. Here comes the fourth."

This was the East Wind, who was dressed like a Chinese.

"Oh! you come from that neighbourhood, do you?" said his mother. "I thought you had been to the Garden of the World?"



HE SAT ON THE BACK OF THE EAST WIND.

"I am going there to-morrow," said the East Wind. "To-morrow it will be a hundred years since I was there. I have just returned from China, where I danced round the porcelain tower till all the bells were set a-jingling. The government officers were being beaten in the street; the bamboo stick was broken across their shoulders; and these were people belonging to the several degrees from the first to the ninth. They cried out: 'Many thanks, my fatherly benefactor!' But the words did not come from their hearts, so I made the bells jingle, and sang: 'Tsing! tsang! tsu!'"

"You are a wanton boy!" said the old woman. "It is well you are going to-morrow to the Garden of the World, for that always improves your mind. Pray drink abundantly from the fountain of wisdom, and take a small phial and bring it home full for me."

"I will," said the East Wind. "But why have you put my brother from the South into the bag? Take him out again; I want him to tell me about the phœnix, for the princess in the Garden of the World always asks after him when I pay her my visit every hundredth year. Open the bag, there's a dear mammy, and I'll give you two pocketfuls of tea-leaves, all green and fresh, just as I plucked them from the bush on the spot where it grew."

"Well, for the sake of the tea, and because you are mammy's own boy, I will open the bag."

This she accordingly did, and out crept the South Wind, looking rather foolish, because the strange prince had witnessed his disgrace.

"There is a palm-tree leaf for the princess," said the South Wind. "The old phœnix, the only bird of his sort in the wide world, gave me this leaf. He has traced upon it with his beak the whole history of his life during the hundred years that form its span. She may, therefore, be now enabled to read how the phœnix set fire to his nest, and sat upon it as it was burning, like the widow of a Hindoo. How the dried twigs did crackle! and what a smoke there was! At length out burst the flames; the old phœnix was burnt to ashes, but an egg lay glowing hot in the fire. It burst with a loud report, and the young bird flew out; and now he is king over all the other birds, and the only phœnix in the world. He has bitten a hole in the leaf which I gave you, and that is his way of sending his duty to the princess."

"Now let us eat something," said the mother of the Winds. And they all sat down to partake of the roast deer. The prince sat beside the East Wind; therefore, they soon became good friends.

"And pray what kind of a princess may she be whom you are talking so much about, and where lies the Garden of the World?"

"Ho, ho!" said the East Wind. "What! have you a mind to go there? Well, you can fly over with me to-morrow; though I must tell you no mortal ever visited it before. It is inhabited by a fairy queen, and in it lies the Island of Happiness, a lovely spot, where death never intrudes.

Get upon my back to-morrow, and I'll take you with me; for I think it can be managed. But now don't speak any more, for I want to sleep."

And then to sleep they all went.

The prince awoke at an early hour next morning, and was not a little surprised on finding himself high above the clouds. He sat on the back of the East Wind, who was holding him faithfully; and they were so high in the air that forests, fields, rivers, and lakes lay beneath them like a painted map.

"Good morning!" said the East Wind. "You might just as well have slept a bit longer, for there is not much to be seen in the flat country beneath us, except you have a mind to count the churches. They look like chalk dots on the green board."

It was the fields and the meadows that he called the "green board."

"It was uncivil of me not to take leave of your mother and brothers," observed the prince.

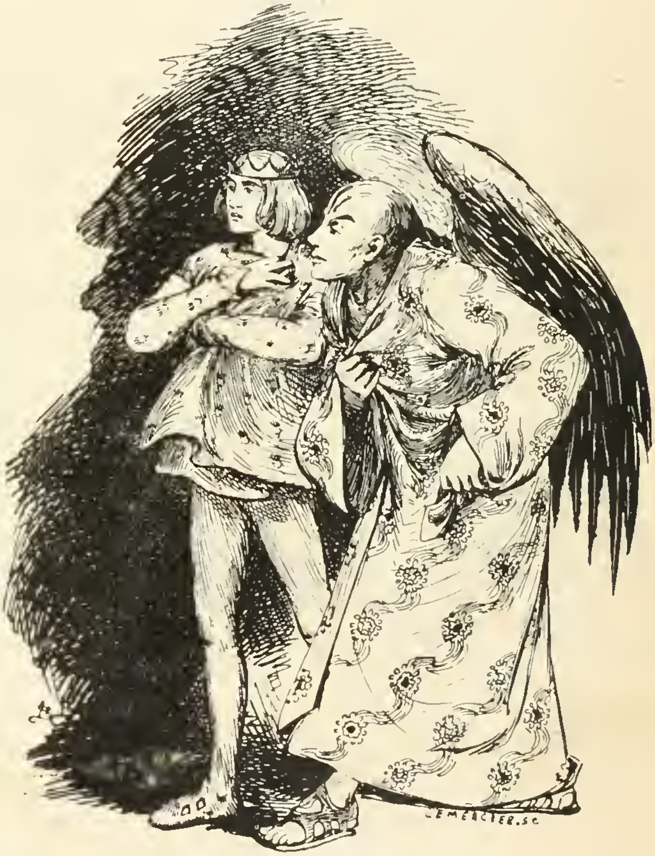
"When one is asleep, one is to be excused," replied the East Wind.

And they began to fly quicker than ever. When they swept across the tree-tops, you might have heard a rustling in all their leaves and branches. On the sea and on the lakes, wherever they flew, the waves rose higher and the large ships dipped down into the water like swimming swans.

Towards evening, when it grew dark, the large towns looked beautiful. They were dotted here and there with lights, much after the fashion of a piece of paper that has burned till it is black, when one sees all the little sparks going out one after another. The prince clapped his hands with delight; but the East Wind begged him to let such demonstrations alone, and rather attend to holding fast, or else he might easily fall down and remain dangling on a church steeple.

Fast as the eagle flew through the black forests, the East Wind flew still faster. The Cossack was scouring the plains on his little horse, but the prince soon outstripped him.

"You can now see Himalaya," said the East Wind, "the highest mountain in Asia—and now we shall soon reach the Garden of the World." They then turned more southwards, and the air was soon perfumed with spices and flowers. Figs and pomegranates grew wild, and clusters of blue and red grapes hung from wild vines. They now descended to the earth, and reclined on the soft grass, where the flowers seemed to nod to the wind as though they had said—"Welcome!"


E. MERCIER, SC.

THEY NOW ENTERED THE CAVERN.

"Are we now in the Garden of the World?" asked the prince.

"No, indeed!" replied the East Wind; "but we soon shall be. Do you see yon wall of rocks, and that broad cavern, where the vines hang down like a huge green curtain? That's the road through which we must pass. Wrap yourself in your mantle, for burning hot as the sun is just hereabouts, it is as cold as ice a few steps farther. The bird who flies past the cavern feels one wing to be in the warm summer abroad while the other is in the depth of winter."

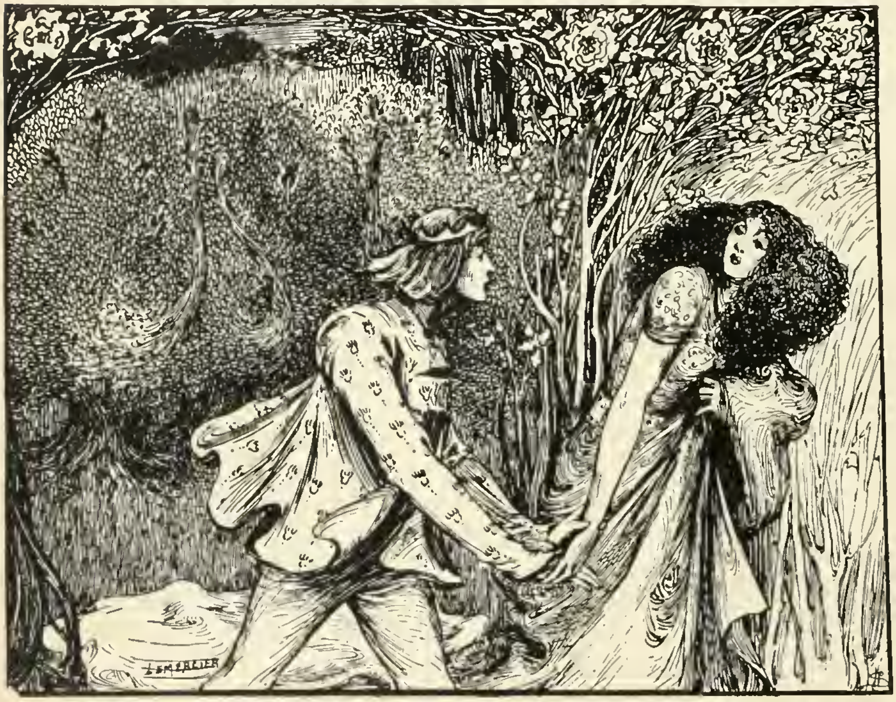
"So then this seems to be the way to the Garden of the World?" asked the prince.

They now entered the cavern. Oh, how icy cold it was! Only it did not last long. The East Wind spread out his wings, and they beamed like the brightest fire. But what a cavern it was, to be sure! The huge blocks of stone, from which the water kept dripping down, hung over them in the oddest shapes, sometimes narrowing up till they were obliged to creep on all-fours, at other times widening into an expanse as lofty as though situated in the open air. It looked like a chapel for the dead, with petrified organs and dumb organ-pipes.

"We seem to be crossing through an abode of Death to reach the Garden of the World!" said the prince. But the East Wind did not answer a syllable, and merely pointed forwards where the loveliest blue light met their eyes. The blocks of stone above their heads rolled away into a mist that finished by assuming the shape of a white cloud on a moonlight night. They were now in a most delightfully mild atmosphere, as cool as the mountain breeze, and as perfumed as a valley of roses. A river, clear as the air itself, was running along, filled with gold and silver fishes; scarlet eels, that emitted blue sparks at every motion, were disporting in the depths of the waters; while the broad leaves of the water-lilies that lay on its surface showed all the tints of the rainbow; the flower itself was a reddish-yellow burning flame that received its nourishment from the water as oil feeds the flame of a lamp. A marble bridge, as delicately sculptured as though it had been made of lace and glass beads, led across the water to the Island of Happiness, where bloomed the Garden of the World.

The East Wind took the prince on his arm and carried him over. And the flowers and leaves sang the sweetest songs of his childhood, but in so lovely a strain of melody as no human voice ever yet sang.

Were they palm-trees or gigantic water-plants that grew on this favoured spot? The prince could not tell, for never had he seen such large and luxuriant trees before. The most singular creepers, too, such as one only sees represented in gold and colours in the margins of illuminated old missals, or twined around the first letter in a chapter, were hanging in long festoons on all sides. It was a most curious mixture of birds, and flowers, and scrolls. Just by a flock of peacocks were standing on the grass displaying their gorgeous fan-like tails. The prince took them for live creatures, but found, on touching them, that they were only plants—large burdock leaves, which, in this favoured spot, beamed with all the glorious colours of the peacock's tail. A lion and tiger were disporting with all the pliancy of cats amongst the green hedges, that were perfumed like the flower of the olive-tree; and both the lion and the tiger were tame. The wild wood-pigeon's plumage sparkled like the fairest pearl, and the bird flapped the lion's mane with its wings; while the antelope, usually so shy, stood near and nodded its head, as if willing to join them at play.



SHE LED THE PRINCE INTO HER PALACE.

Now came the fairy of the garden. Her clothes were radiant as the sun, and her countenance was as serene as that of a happy mother rejoicing over her child. She was young and beautiful, and was followed by a train of lovely girls, each wearing a beaming star in her hair. The East Wind gave her the leaf sent by the phœnix, when her eyes sparkled with joy. She took the prince by the hand and led him into her palace, whose walls were of the hues of the most splendid tulip when it is turned towards the sun. The ceiling was a large radiant flower, and the more one looked at it, the deeper its calyx appeared to grow. The prince stepped to the window, and looked through one of the panes, on which was depicted Jacob's dream. The ladder seemed to reach to the real sky, and the angels seemed to be flapping their wings. The fairy smiled at his astonished look, and explained that time had engraved its events on each pane, but they were not merely lifeless images, for the leaves rustled, and the persons went and came as in a looking-glass. He then looked through other panes, where he saw depicted the events of ancient history. For all that had happened in the world lived and moved upon these panes ; time only could have engraved so cunning a masterpiece.

The fairy then led him into a lofty, noble hall, with transparent walls. Here were a number of portraits, each of which seemed more beautiful than the other. There were millions of happy faces whose laughing and singing seemed to melt into one harmonious whole ; those above were so small that they appeared less than the smallest rosebud when represented on paper by a mere dot. In the midst of the hall stood a large tree with luxuriant drooping branches. Golden apples, both great and small, hung like china oranges amid the green leaves. From each leaf fell a sparkling red dewdrop, as if the tree were shedding tears of blood.

" We will now get into the boat," said the fairy, " and enjoy the coolness of the water. The boat rocks, but does not stir from the spot. while all the countries of the earth glide past us." And it was wonderful to behold how the whole coast moved. First came the lofty snow-capped Alps, overhung with clouds and overgrown with fir-trees. The horn was sounding its melancholy notes, while the shepherd was carolling in the vale. Then banana-trees flung their drooping branches over the boat ; coal-black swans swam on the water, and flowers and animals of the strangest description might be seen on the shore. This was New Holland, the fifth part of the world, that glided past, with a view of the blue mountains. One could hear the hymns of the priests and see the savages dancing to the sound of drums and trumpets made of bones. Egypt's pyramids reaching to the clouds, overturned columns and sphinxes, half buried in the sand, followed in their turn. The aurora borealis next shined upon the extinguished volcanoes of the north. These were fireworks that nobody could have imitated ! The prince was delighted ; and he saw a hundred times more than what we have mentioned.

" Can I remain here for ever ? " asked he.

" That depends on yourself," replied the fairy. " If you do not long for what is forbidden, you may stay here for ever."

" I will not touch the apple on the Tree of Knowledge," said the prince ; " here are thousands of fruits equally fine."

" Examine your own heart, and if you do not feel sufficient strength, return with the East Wind who brought you hither. He is now about to fly back, and will not appear again in this place for the next hundred years. The time would seem to you here to be only a hundred hours, but even that is a long span for temptation and sin. Every evening, on leaving you, I shall be obliged to say : 'Come with me ! ' I shall make a sign with my hand, yet you must stay away. If once you followed, your longing would increase at every step. You would then enter the hall where grows the Tree of Knowledge. I sleep beneath its perfumed, drooping branches. You would bend over me, and I should be forced to smile. But if you pressed a kiss on my lips, then would the garden sink into the earth and be lost for you. The sharp winds of the desert would howl around you, the cold rain would trickle over your head, and sorrow and distress would fall to your lot."

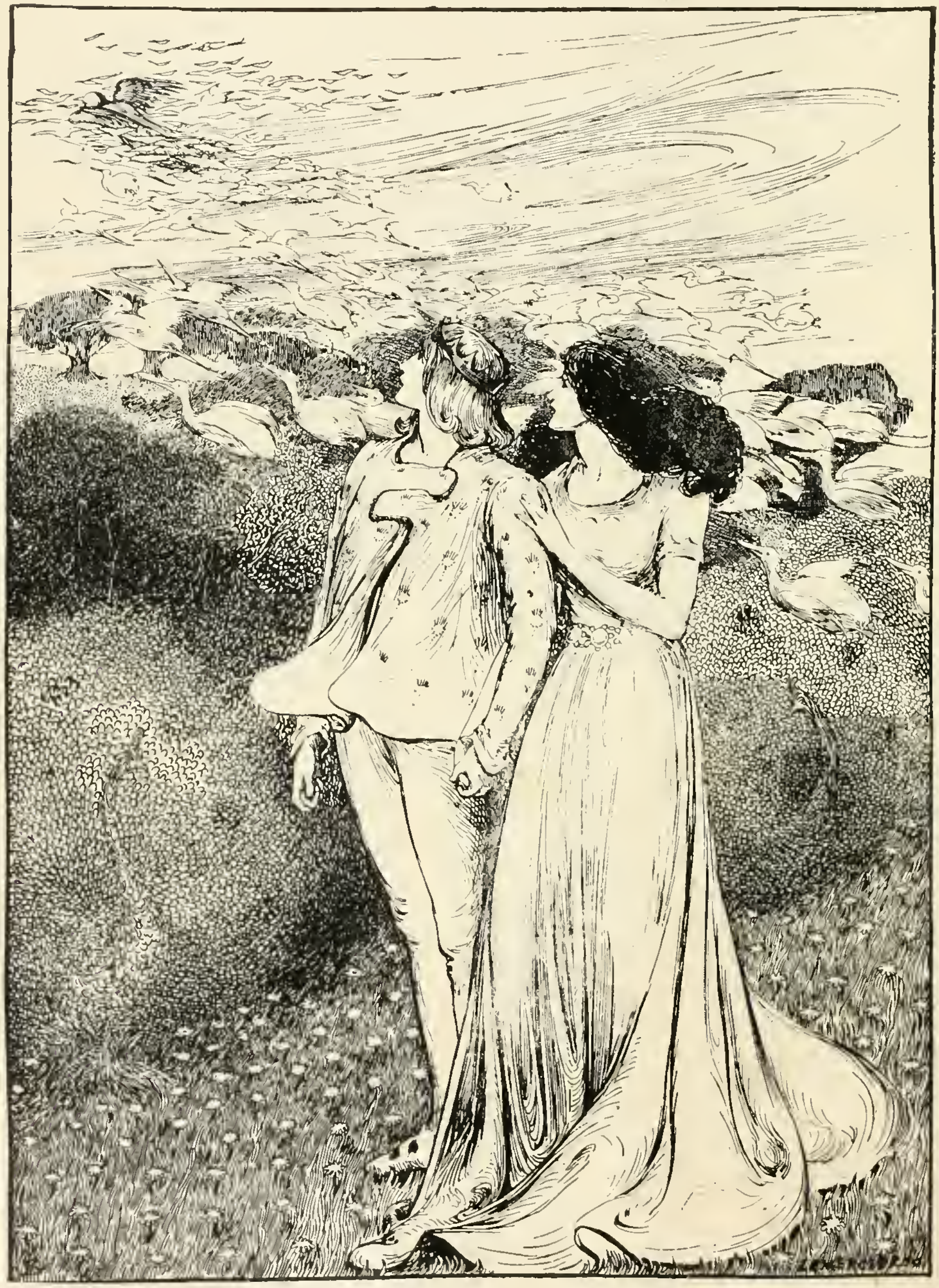
" I will remain here," said the prince. And the East Wind kissed his forehead, saying, " Be firm, and then we shall meet again in a hundred years. Farewell ! farewell ! " And the East Wind spread his large wings, and they shined like the lightning in harvest time, or like the northern lights in a cold winter.

" Farewell ! farewell ! " sounded from the flowers and the trees. Storks and pelicans flew in long rows, like streaming ribbons, to accompany him to the boundaries of the garden.

" We will now begin our dances," said the fairy. " At the close, when I'm dancing with you, and just as the sun is sinking, you will see me make a sign, and you will hear me say, 'Come with me.' But do not do it. For a hundred years shall I be obliged to repeat the same thing every evening ; and each time when it is over will you gain fresh strength. In the end you'll cease to think about it. This evening will be the first time—and now you are warned."

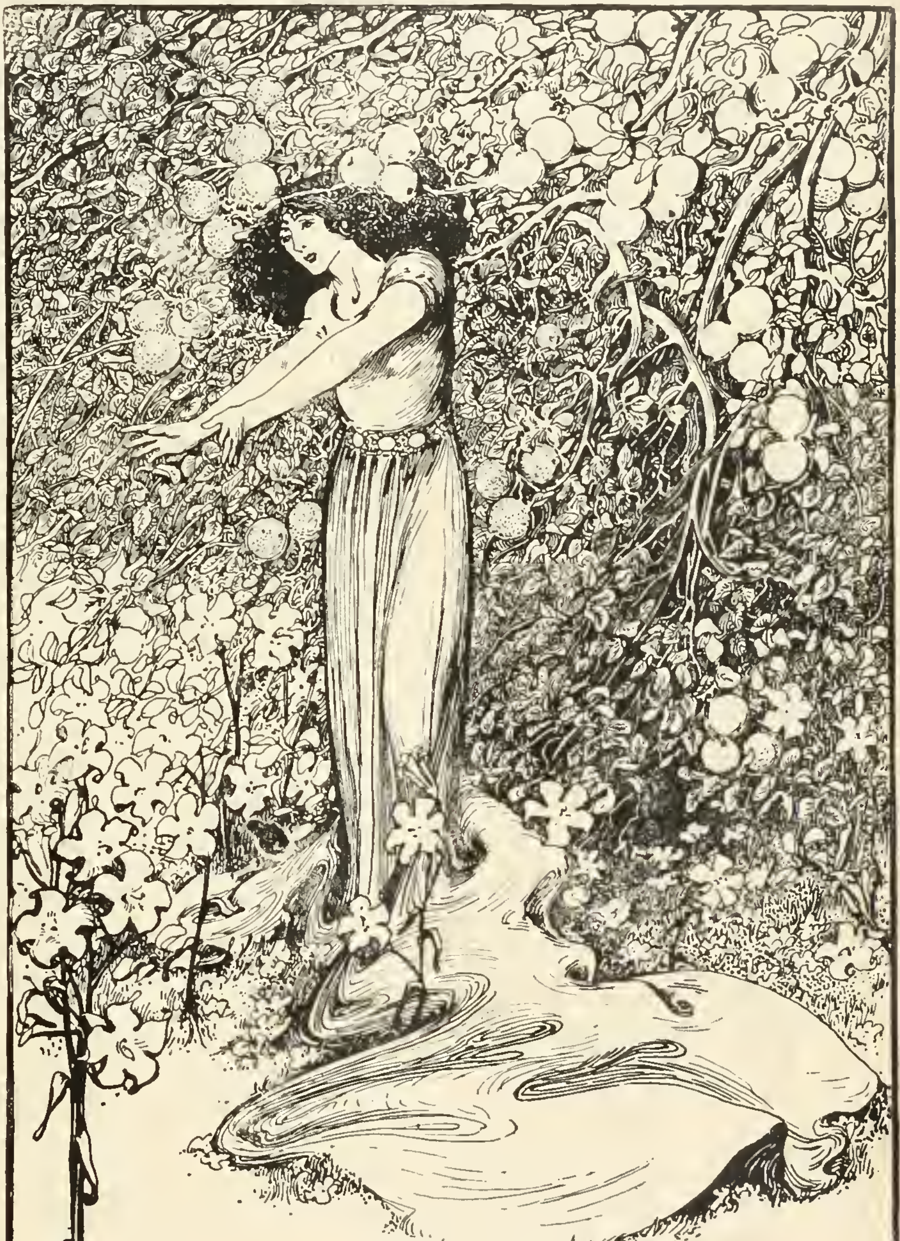
The fairy then led him into a large room made of white transparent lilies. The yellow stamina in each flower pictured a little golden harp that yielded a sweet music partaking of the combined sounds of stringed instruments and the tones of the flute. Lovely girls with slender, aerial figures, and dressed in lightest gauze, floated through the mazes of the dance, and sang of the delights of living and being immortal, and blooming for ever in the Garden of the World.

The sun now set. The whole sky was one mass of gold that imparted the tints of the richest roses to the lilies; and the prince drank of the sparkling wine handed to him by the young maidens, and felt a bliss he had never before experienced. He saw the background of the ballroom now opening, and the Tree of Knowledge stood before him in such streams of light that his eyes were dazzled. The singing that rang in his ears was soft and lovely as his mother's voice, and it seemed as if she sang, "Mv child! my beloved child!"



STORKS AND PELICANS FLEW IN LONG ROWS.

The fairy then made him a sign with her eyes, and cried most sweetly: "Come with me! Come with me!" And he rushed towards her, forgetting his promise, though it was but the first evening, and she continued to beckon to him and to smile. The spicy perfumes around grew yet more intoxicating; the harps sounded sweeter; and it was as if the millions of smiling faces in the room, where grew the tree, nodded and sang: "We must know everything! Man is the lord of the earth!" And there were no more tears of blood dropping down from the leaves of the Tree of Knowledge; but he thought he saw red sparkling stars instead.



THE FAIRY CRIED, "COME WITH ME! COME WITH ME!"

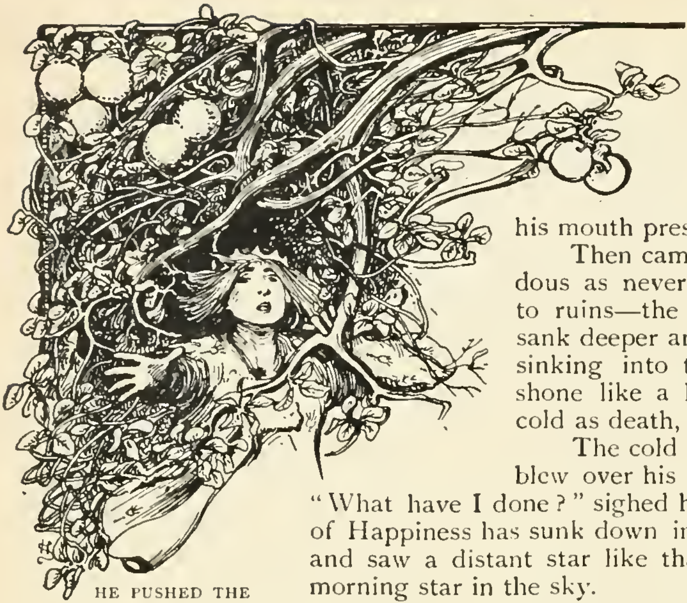
"Come with me! come with me!" said the thrilling tones; and at each step the prince's cheeks glowed more intensely, and his blood rushed more wildly.

"I must!" said he; "it is no sin, and cannot be one! Why not follow when beauty calls? I will see her asleep; and provided I do not kiss her, there will be no harm done—and kiss I will not, for I have strength to resist, and a firm will."

And the fairy cast aside her dazzling attire, bent back the boughs, and in another moment was completely concealed.

"I have not yet sinned," said the prince, "and do not intend to sin!" And then he pushed the boughs aside; there she lay already asleep, and lovely as only the fairy of the Garden of the World is privileged to be. She smiled in her dreams; yet as he bent over her, he saw tears trembling between her eyelashes.

"And do you weep for me?" whispered he. "Oh, weep not, most admirable of women! I



HE PUSHED THE BOUGHS ASIDE.

now begin to understand the happiness to be found in this place. It penetrates into my blood, and I feel the joys of the blessed in this my earthly form! Though it were ever after eternally dark for me, one moment like this is happiness enough!" And he kissed the tears in her eyes, and his mouth pressed her lips.

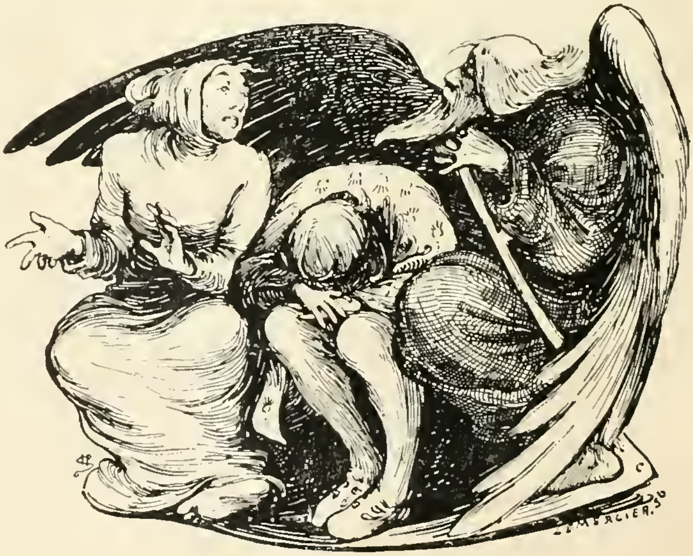
Then came a thunder-clap, so loud and so tremendous as never was heard before. Down everything fell to ruins—the beautiful fairy, the blooming garden, all sank deeper and deeper still. The prince saw the garden sinking into the dark abyss below, and it soon only shone like a little star in the distance. He turned as cold as death, and closed his eyes, and lay senseless.

The cold rain fell on his face, and the sharp wind blew over his head. He then returned to consciousness. "What have I done?" sighed he. "Alas! I have sinned, and the Island of Happiness has sunk down into the earth!" And he opened his eyes and saw a distant star like that of the sinking garden; but it was the morning star in the sky.

He got up and found himself in the large forest close to the Cavern of the Winds. The mother of the Winds sat by him, and looked angry, and raised her arm aloft.

"The very first evening," said she. "I thought it would be so! If you were my son, you should be put into the bag presently."

"Into it he shall go, sure enough!" said Death. He was a stalwart man with a scythe in his hand, and large black wings. "In his coffin shall he be laid, but not yet. I'll only mark him now, and allow him to wander about the world yet awhile, to expiate his sins and to grow better. But I shall come at last. When he least expects it, I shall put him into the black bag, place it on my head, and fly up to the stars. There, too, blooms a lovely garden, and if he be good and pious, he will be allowed to enter it; but should his thoughts be wicked, and his heart still full of sin, then will he sink in his coffin yet lower than he saw the Garden of the World sink down; and it will be only once in every thousand years that I shall go and fetch him, when he will either be condemned to sink still deeper, or be borne aloft to the beaming stars above."



The Little Swineherd

THE PRINCE IN DISGUISE

THERE was once a poor prince, who had but a very small kingdom ; still, as it was large enough to support a wife, he had a mind to marry.

It was, to be sure, rather bold of him to venture to say to the emperor's daughter : " Will you have me ? " Yet, venture he did ; for his name was celebrated both far and near, and there were scores of princesses who would gladly have said " Yes " ; but the question was, whether she would say so or not ?

Now we shall see, presently.

Over the grave of the prince's father there grew a rose-tree, and a beautiful rose-tree it was. It only bloomed once in every five years, and then it only bore one rose ; but what a rose it was ! Its perfume was so exquisite, that everybody forgot their cares and sorrows when they smelt it. Besides this, he had a nightingale, who sang as though all the lovely melodies in the world had been assembled in its little throat. He resolved to make the princess a present of this rose and this nightingale, and accordingly they were placed in two large silver shrines, and sent to her.

The emperor had them brought to him in a large room, where the princess was playing at " There came a knight a-wooing " with her ladies-in-waiting ; and when she saw the silver shrines containing the presents, she clapped her hands for joy.

" If it could but be a kitten ! " said she. But out came the rose-tree with the beautiful rose.

" How very elegantly it is made ! " exclaimed all the court ladies.

" It is more than elegant," said the emperor ; " it is charming."

But the princess, having felt it, was ready to cry.

" Fie, papa ! " said she ; " it is not an artificial rose, but merely a natural one."

" Fie ! " echoed all the ladies-in-waiting ; " it is merely a natural rose."

" Let's see what the other shrine may contain, before we fly into a passion," said his majesty ; and then out came the nightingale, and sang so sweetly, that nobody at first thought of any spiteful fault-finding.

" *Superbe ! charmant !* " cried the court ladies ; for they all chattered French, however badly.

" The bird reminds me of the late empress's musical-box," observed an old lord-in-waiting ; " it has the same tone and the same execution "

" Yes," said the emperor, crying like a little child.

" But it is not a real bird, I trust ? " asked the princess.

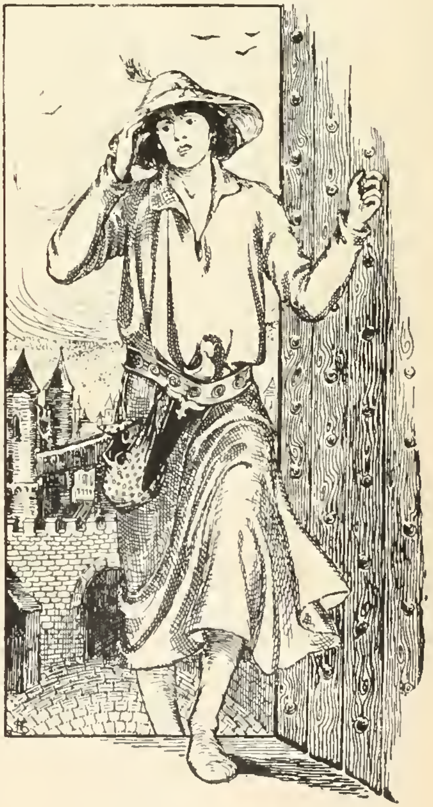
" Yes, it is a real bird," said those who had brought it.

" Then let it fly away," said the princess, who would not hear of the prince coming to pay his respects to her.

But he was not to be discouraged. He painted his countenance brown and black, drew his cap over his forehead, and then knocked at the palace door.

" Good morning, emperor," said he ; " can I find any employment at the palace ? "

" Why," said the emperor, " there are so many that apply for places, that I really don't know whether we can do any-



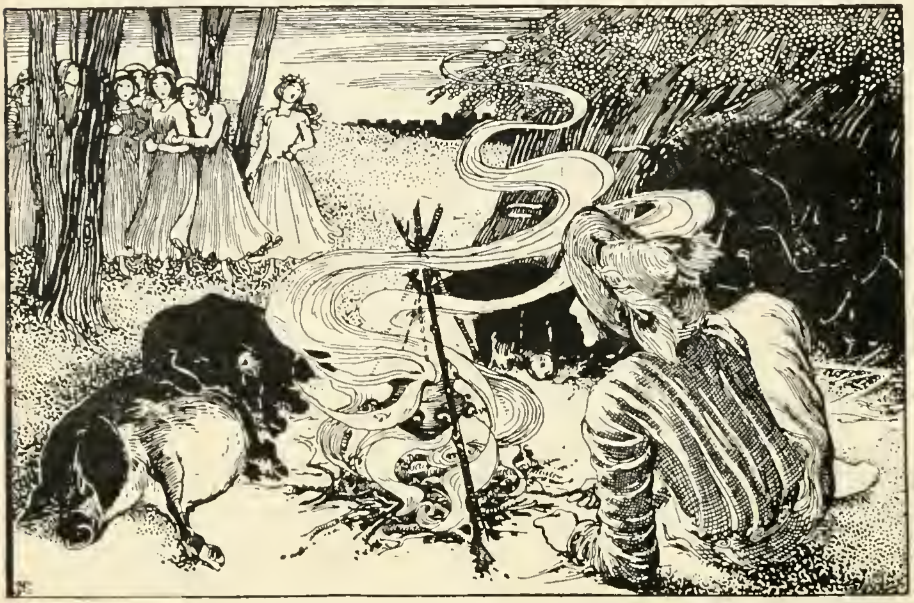
" GOOD MORNING," SAID HE.

thing for you; however, I'll bear it in mind. But, now I think of it, I am in want of somebody to take care of the swine; for I have a vast number of pigs."

So the prince became the imperial swineherd. They gave him a wretched little room near the pig-sty, and here he was obliged to remain. But he sat and worked the whole day, and by the evening he had made a neat little pipkin, and round it was a set of bells, and the moment the pot began to boil, they fell to jingling most sweetly, and played the old melody:—

"Oh! dearest Augustine,
All's gone clean away!"

But the most ingenious part of the business was, that if one held one's finger in the steam of the pipkin, one could immediately smell what dinner was cooking on every hearth in the town. This was indeed something far superior to the rose!



THE PRINCE BECAME SWINEHERD.

The princess now happened to be walking out with her ladies-in-waiting; and on hearing the melody, she stood still, and appeared highly delighted; for she could play "Oh! dearest Augustine." It was, indeed, the only tune she could play, but then she played it with one finger.

"Why, that's what I play!" cried she. "He must be a very intellectual swineherd. I say, go and ask him the price of his instrument."

So one of the ladies-in-waiting was obliged to go down to speak to him; but she put on pattens.

"How much do you ask for your pipkin?" inquired the lady.

"I ask ten kisses from the princess," said the swineherd.

"Good gracious!" said the lady-in-waiting.

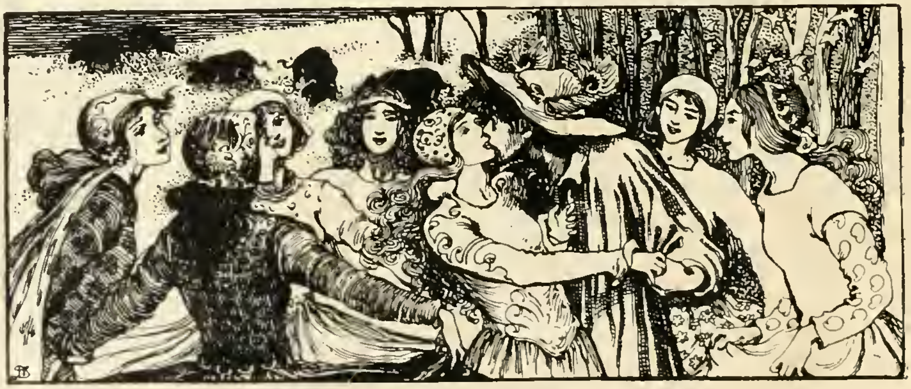
"I will not take less," answered the swineherd.

"Well, what did he say?" asked the princess.

"I dare not repeat it," replied the lady-in-waiting.

"Then whisper it into my ear."

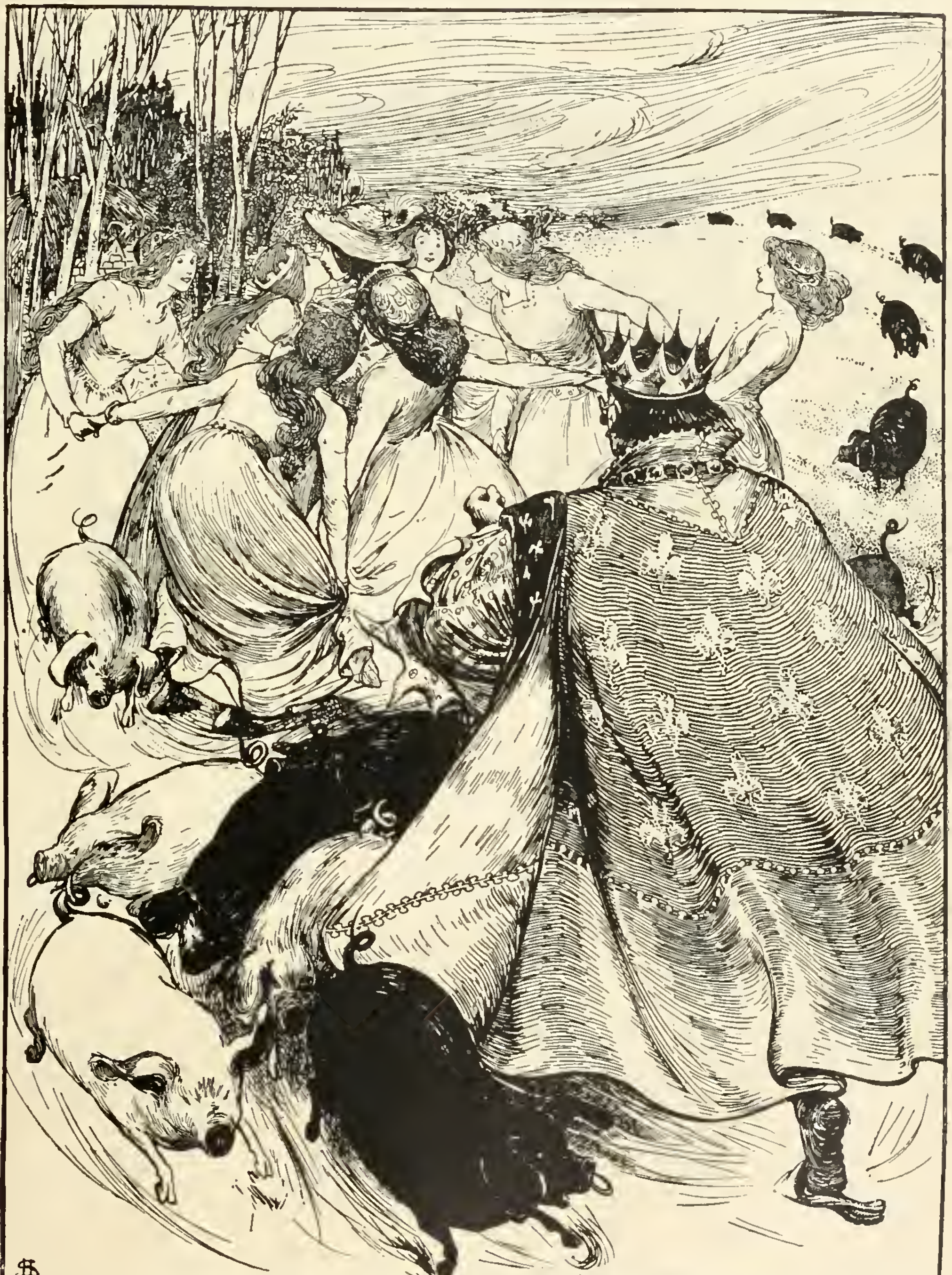
"He is very ill bred!" observed the princess, as she turned away. But after walking a few steps, the bells jingled so sweetly—



THE SWINEHERD GOT TEN KISSES.

"Oh! dearest Augustine,
All's gone clean away!"

that the princess said, "I say, go and ask him if he'll take ten kisses from my ladies-in-waiting."



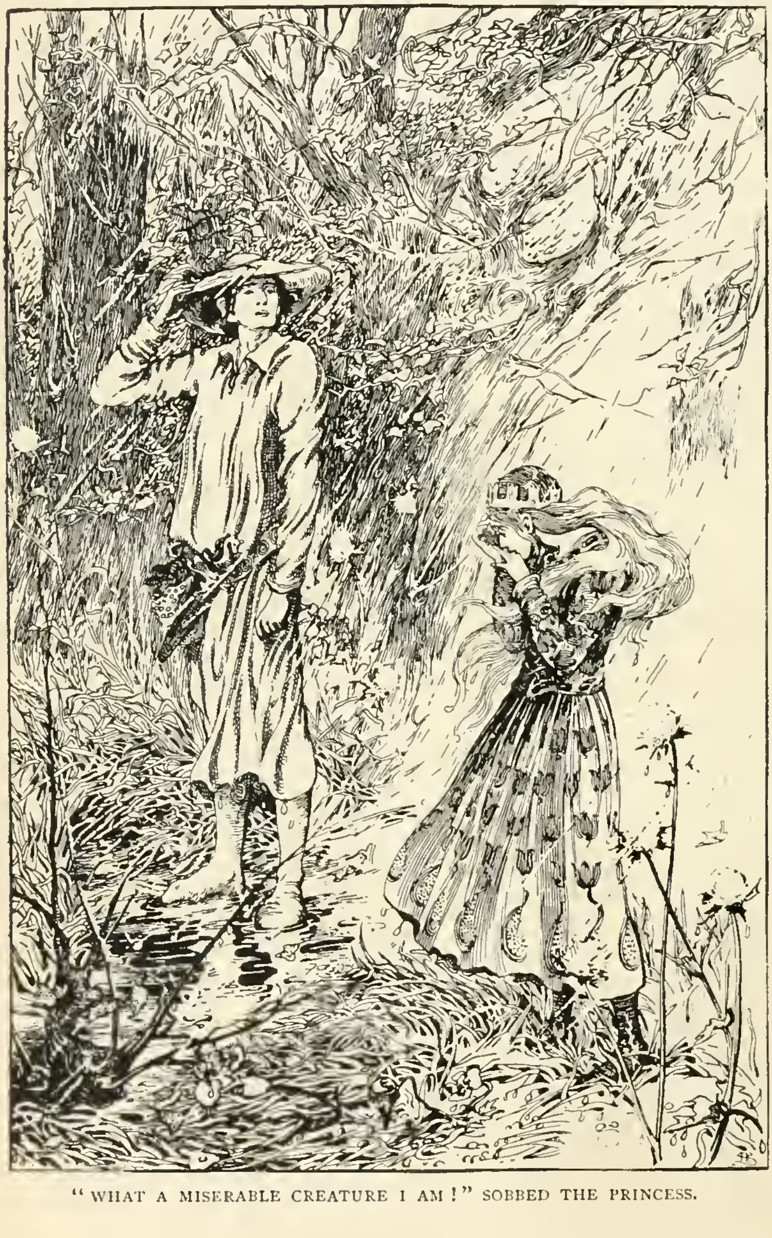
"WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?" CRIED HE.

"I'm much obliged to you," said the swineherd; "either I'll have ten kisses from the princess, or else I'll keep my pipkin."

"How tiresome he is!" said the princess. "Then you must stand round me. so that nobody may see me."

Accordingly, the ladies-in-waiting stood before her, and spread out their clothes, and the swineherd got the ten kisses, and she obtained the pipkin.

And how delighted she was! All that evening, and the whole day following, was the pipkin set to boil; and there was not a hearth in the kingdom on which anything could be cooked without their knowing it—from my lord-chamberlain's down to the shoemaker's. The ladies-in-waiting clapped their hands and jumped with joy.



"WHAT A MISERABLE CREATURE I AM!" SOBBED THE PRINCESS.

"We now know who is going to eat sweet porridge and an omelet, or who will have gruel and broiled meat. How interesting, to be sure!"

"Very interesting," quoth the mistress of the robes.

"But you must not blab, because I am the emperor's daughter."

"Of course not," said they in a breath.

The swineherd, or rather, the prince — though they took him to be a real swineherd—did not let a day go by without working at something; and so he next fashioned a rattle, which only required springing to play all the waltzes, galops and polkas known since the creation of the world.

"Really, this is *superbe*!" said the princess, as she passed by. "I never heard a finer composition. I say, go in and ask him what's the price of the instrument. Only I will not give any more kisses."

"He wants a hundred kisses from her royal highness!" said the lady-in-waiting, who had been in to inquire.

"He must be crazy, I should think!" said the princess, turning away. But after going a few steps, she stopped short. "We must encourage the fine arts," said she, "and I am the emperor's daughter. So tell him that he shall have ten kisses as before, and he may take the rest from my ladies-in-waiting."

"Nay, but we should not much relish that," said the ladies-in-waiting.

"Nonsense!" said the princess; "if I can kiss him, surely you may. Remember I give you board, and lodging, and wages." And so the ladies-in-waiting were obliged to go in once more to speak to him.

"A hundred kisses from the princess," said he, "or it's no bargain."

"Stand before me," said she; and the ladies-in-waiting did as they were bid, and he began kissing the princess.

"What's that mob after, near the pig-sty?" asked the emperor, who had just stepped into the balcony. He rubbed his eyes, and then put on his spectacles. "Why, it's the ladies-in-waiting, who are after some trick, I'll be bound. I must go down and see." So he drew up his slippers, for they were shoes down at heel.

My goodness! what haste he did make!

As soon as he had reached the yard, he walked very softly, and the ladies-in-waiting were so busy counting the kisses, that there might be no cheating, that they did not perceive the emperor. He stood on tiptoe.

"What's the meaning of this?" cried he, on seeing them kissing away at such a rate, and he flung his slipper at their heads just as the swineherd had received the eighty-sixth kiss.

"Get out of my sight," said the emperor, who was very angry; and both the princess and the swineherd were turned out of his empire.

There she stood and wept, while the swineherd grumbled, and the rain fell in torrents.

"What a miserable creature I am!" sobbed the princess. "Would that I had married the handsome prince! Oh, how unhappy am I!"

The swineherd then went behind a tree, and rubbed the black and brown paint off his face, and threw off his shabby clothes, and appeared in his princely garb, and looking so handsome, that the princess involuntarily curtseyed to him.

"I have now learned to despise you," said he. "You refused an honourable prince—you could not appreciate a rose or a nightingale—but you could stoop to kiss a swineherd to obtain a toy. You must now suffer the punishment."

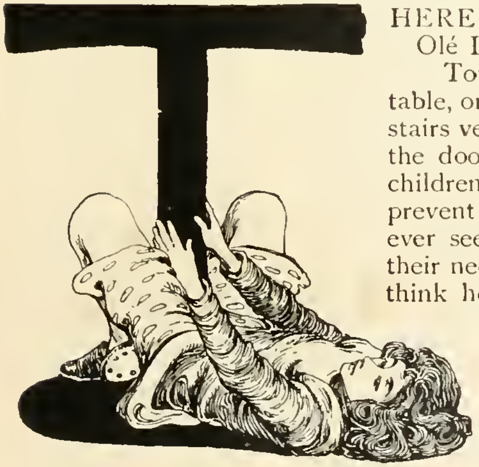
So saying, he went back into his kingdom, and shut the door in her face; and she was left outside to sing—

"Oh! dearest Augustine,
All's gone clean away!"

* * *

A Week with Olé Luk-Oie

OLÉ LUK-OIE; OR, THE DUSTMAN



THERE is no one in the world who knows so many stories as Olé Luk-Oie, and nobody can tell them so prettily.

Towards evening when the children are sitting round the table, or upon their stools, in steals Olé Luk-Oie. He comes upstairs very softly, for he walks about in his socks, and then opens the doors so gently—and, heigh presto! he squirts dust into the children's eyes, in very, very small quantities, yet sufficient to prevent their keeping their eyes open, and that's why they can't ever see him. He slinks behind them, and breathes softly over their necks, and then their heads begin to feel heavy. But don't think he hurts them. Oh, no! Olé Luk-Oie means kindly towards all children—he only wants them to be quiet, and that they never are till they have been put to bed; and he merely wishes them to be quiet in order that he may tell them pretty stories.

So, when the children have fallen to sleep, Olé Luk-Oie sits upon their bed. He is very well dressed, for his coat is made of some silk stuff, though it is impossible to tell its colour, for it changes from green to red or to blue, according to which side he turns. He carries an umbrella under each arm, and he spreads one of these, all lined with pretty pictures, over the heads of good children, which makes them dream of amusing stories all night long; but as for the other umbrella, which is completely blank, he spreads that over naughty children, who then sleep so heavily that next morning when they wake they find they have dreamed nothing at all.

Now we are going to hear how Olé Luk-Oie came every evening, for a whole week, to a little boy named Hjalmar, and what he told him. There were seven stories, as there are seven days in the week.

MONDAY

LISTEN to me," said Olé Luk-Oie at night, after he had sent Hjalmar to bed; "I am going to deck out the room." Accordingly all the flowers in the flower-pots shot up into large trees, that spread their wide branches beneath the ceiling and along the walls, so that the whole room looked an enchanting summer-house; and all the branches were loaded with blossoms, and each blossom was lovelier than a rose, and smelt most deliciously, and if you had tasted them you would have said they were sweeter than sweetmeats! The fruit sparkled like gold, and there were, besides, cakes literally bursting with plums. It was a rare sight indeed! But at the same moment a woeful groan arose from the box that stood on the table, and contained Hjalmar's school-books.

"What is that?" said Olé Luk-Oie, going to the table and opening the box. It was the slate that was all up in arms because there was a wrong figure in a sum, and threatened to fall to pieces. The pencil was hopping about and leaping as far as its string would allow, just as if it had been a little dog trying to help the sum, but not able to manage it. And then there came a groan from Hjalmar's copy-book—and an ugly one it was too. On each leaf stood the capital letters according to order, and every one had a small letter by its side—these formed the copy. Next to them stood other letters that thought they looked like the former, and these had been penned by Hjalmar, but they lay very much as if they had fallen over the pencil line on which they ought to have stood upright.

"Look! this is the way you ought to stand upright!" said the copy; "you seem as if you had been bent double by a violent blow."

"Oh, we should be willing enough to stand upright," said Hjalmar's letters, "only we can't. We are such deplorable things."

"Then you must take physic," said Olé Luk-Oie.

"Oh, no!" cried they, placing themselves as straight as could be.

"There, now—we shan't be able to have any stories!" said Olé Luk-Oie; "for I must drill them. One, two—one, two!" and he drilled the letters till they all stood as slim and as straight as ever copy could be. But when Olé Luk-Oie was gone, and Hjalmar looked at them next morning, they were just as deplorable as ever.

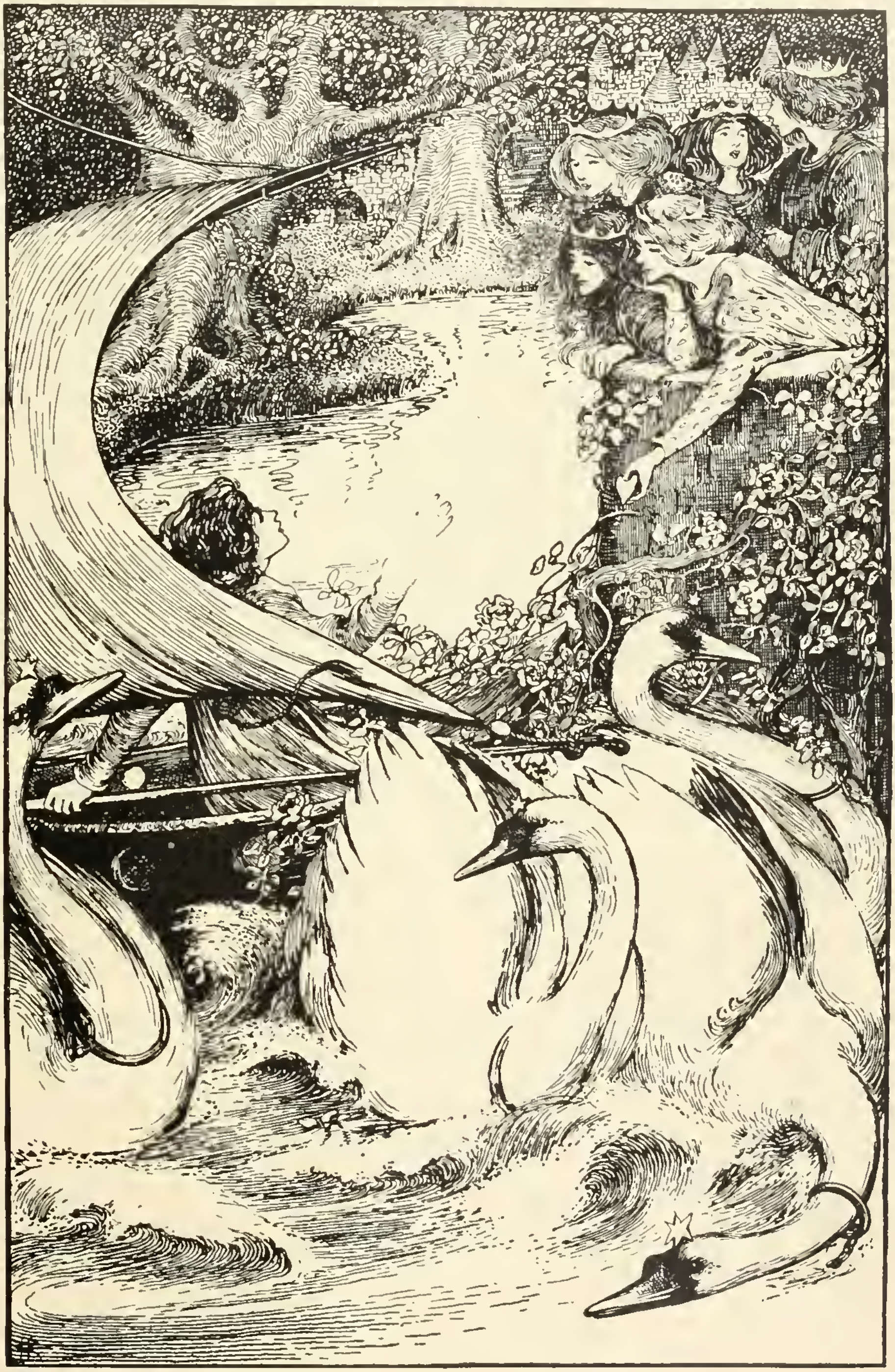
TUESDAY

AS soon as Hjalmar was in bed, Olé Luk-Oie touched all the pieces of furniture in his room with his little magic wand, and they immediately began to talk, and each talked of nothing but itself.

Over the chest of drawers hung a large picture in a gilt frame, that represented a landscape. In it might be seen old trees, flowery meadows, and a broad river skirting a forest and flowing past a number of castles, till it reached the open sea.

Olé Luk-Oie touched the picture with his magic wand, and immediately the birds began to sing, the branches to rustle, and the clouds to sail; even the shadows of the latter might be seen gliding over the landscape.

Olé Luk-Oie now lifted little Hjalmar up to the frame, and placed his feet in the tall grass inside the picture; and there he stood, with the sun shining upon him through the branches of the trees. He then ran to the water's edge, and got into a little boat that was lying there; the boat was painted red and white, the sails were as dazzling as silver, and six swans, all wearing gold crowns round their necks, and a brightly beaming blue star on their heads, towed the boat



ON THE BALCONIES STOOD PRINCESSES.

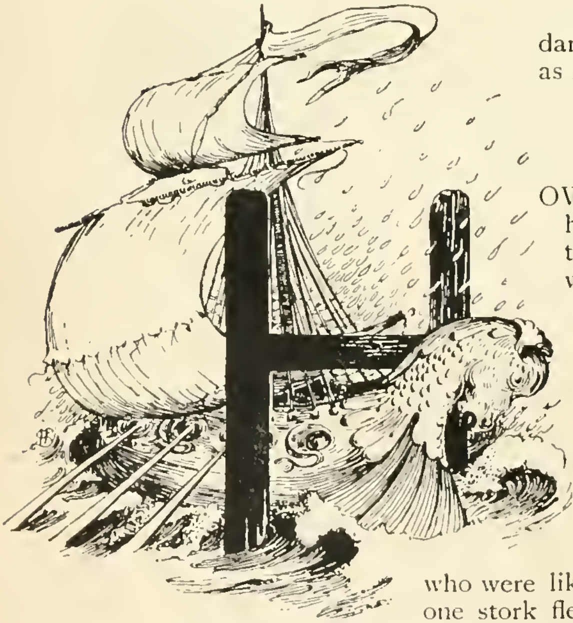
past the green forest, where the trees related stories of robbers and witches, and the flowers told all about pretty little elves, as well as what the butterflies had said to them.

The most beautiful fishes with gold and silver scales swam after the boat; and every now and then they gave a leap that ruffled the surface of the water, while birds both red and blue, great and small, flew behind in two long rows. The gnats kept dancing, and the cockchafers saying: "Buzz! buzz!" They all wanted to follow Hjalmar, and they each had a story to tell.

What a pleasant sail he had! Sometimes the woods were quite thick and dark, at other times they were laid out like the most enchanting garden, full of flowers and sunshine; then there were castles built of glass or of marble, and on the balconies stood princesses, all of whom wore the familiar faces of the little girls Hjalmar knew and had played with. Each held out her hand to offer him the prettiest sugar heart that ever confectioner sold; and Hjalmar caught hold of one side of the sugar heart, as he sailed past, and the princess kept firm hold of the other, so that each had a piece, the smallest falling to her share and the largest to Hjalmar's. At each castle little princes stood upon guard as sentinels; they presented arms with tiny golden swords, and made it rain plums and tin soldiers, so that one saw at once they were real princes.

Hjalmar went on sailing, now through forests, now through vast halls, now through the middle of some city; and he passed through the town where lived the nurse who had carried him in her arms when he was quite a little boy, and had been so kind to him. And she nodded and smiled, and sang the pretty little stanza that she had herself composed and sent to Hjalmar:—

"How oft thine image doth arise,
Hjalmar dear! before mine eyes,
As I recall those days of joy
When I might kiss my baby boy.
Oh, it was hard to part from thee,
Whose first sweet words were lisped to me.
But may kind Heaven grant my prayer,
And bless my angel *here* and *there*."



And all the birds joined in the song, the flowers danced on their stems, and the old trees nodded, just as if Olé Luk-Oie were telling them stories.

Wednesday

HOW it did rain, to be sure! Hjalmar could hear it in his sleep; and when Olé Luk-Oie opened the window, the water stood as high as the window-seat. There was a complete lake outside, but the prettiest ship in the world stood close to the house.

"Will you sail with me, little Hjalmar?" asked Olé Luk-Oie; "if so, you can reach foreign lands to-night and yet be back by morning."

And Hjalmar found himself suddenly standing, in his holiday clothes, on the beautiful ship, when the weather immediately grew fine, and they sailed through the streets, rounded the church, and then emerged into the open sea. They sailed till they lost sight of land, when they saw a flock of storks who were likewise leaving their home to go to a warmer climate; one stork flew behind the other, and they had already flown a long, long way. One of them was so tired that his wings could scarcely carry him any further; he was the last in the row, and was a good bit behind the others. At last he kept sinking, with outspread wings, lower and lower still; then he flapped his wings twice more, but to no purpose; his feet now touched the rigging of the vessel, then he glided down from the sails, and, plump! there he stood on the deck.

A sailor-boy now took him and put him into the hen-house, amongst ducks, hens and guinea-fowls. The poor stork remained quite confounded in the midst of them.

"Look at that chap!" said the hens.

And the guinea-fowl puffed himself out to look as big as he could, and inquired who he might be, while the ducks walked backwards, cackling, "Quack! quack!"

And the stork told all about warm Africa and the Pyramids, and the ostriches that run through the desert like wild horses. But the ducks could not understand what he said, and they then cackled amongst each other: “I think we are all of opinion that he is very stupid.”

“Yes, stupid enough in all conscience,” said the guinea-fowl, and fell into a rage. So the stork remained silent, and thought of his dear Africa.

“Those are very dainty, thin legs of yours,” said the guinea-fowl; “pray, what may they cost per yard?”

“Quack! quack! quack!” tittered all the ducks, but the stork pretended not to have heard what had been said.

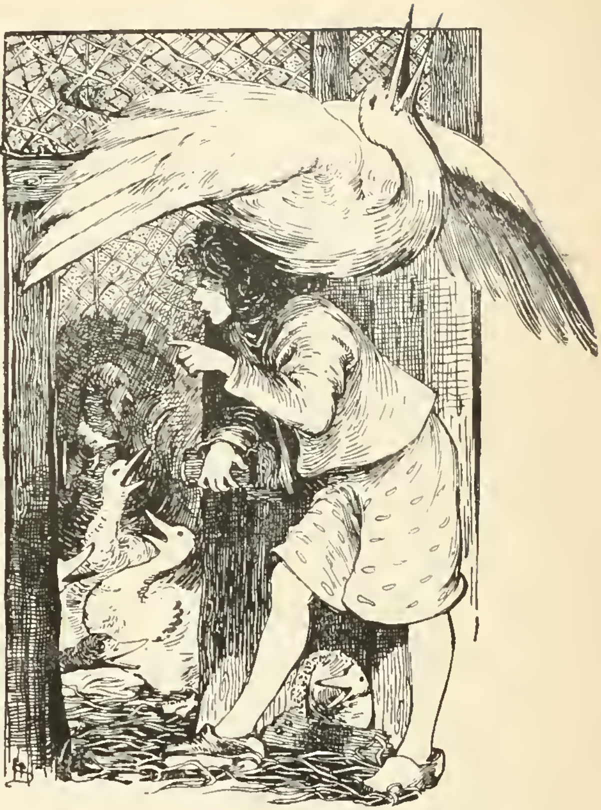
“You may as well laugh too,” said the guinea-fowl to him, “for it was very witty. Or was it above your understanding? In truth, I fancy he is not very deep; we must try and lower ourselves to his level.” And then he clucked, and the ducks cackled, “Ghick, ghack! Ghick, ghack!”

It was quite abominable to hear how they amused themselves.

But Hjalmar went to the hen-house, and opened the door, and called to the stork, who hopped out to him upon deck. He was now rested, and it seemed as if he nodded to Hjalmar to thank him. He then spread his wings, and flew to warmer lands; while the hens clucked, the ducks set up a cackling, and the guinea-fowl turned scarlet in the head.

“We shall cook you to-morow for broth,” said Hjalmar, and thereupon he awoke, and found himself in his little bed.

It was a singular voyage, to be sure, that Olé Luk-Oie had made him take during that night!



“WE SHALL COOK YOU TO-MORROW,” SAID HJALMAR.

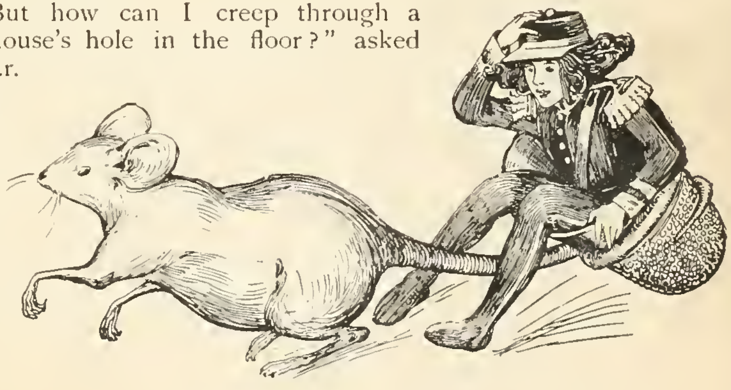
THURSDAY.

“WHAT do you think I have here?” said Olé Luk-Oie, “only you must not be frightened. It is a little mouse”; and then he stretched forth his hand, in which lay the elegant little creature. “She is come to invite you to a wedding. There are two little mice about to be married to-night. They live under your mother's store-room floor, which must be a very pretty dwelling.”

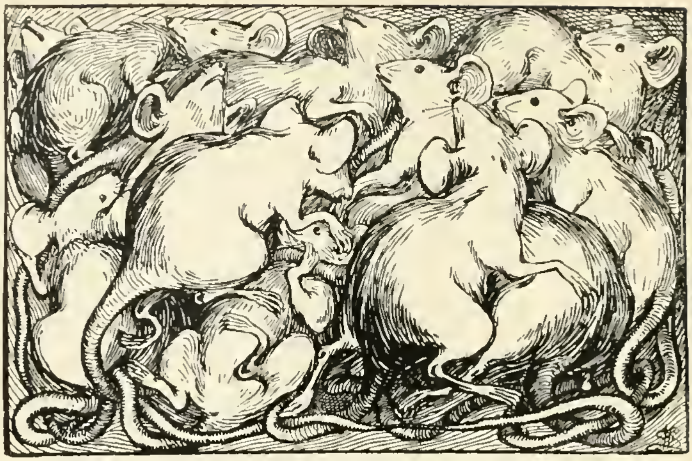
“But how can I creep through a little mouse's hole in the floor?” asked Hjalmar.

“Leave that to me,” said Olé Luk-Oie; “I'll contrive to make you little enough.” And he touched Hjalmar with his little magic wand, whereupon he became less and less, till at last he was not so long as one's finger. “Now you can borrow the clothes of the lead soldier, which I think will just fit you; and it looks well to wear a uniform when one goes into company.”

“That's true,” said Hjalmar; and in a moment he was dressed like the sprucest lead soldier.



AWAY THEY WENT TO THE MOUSE'S WEDDING.



THE MICE WERE NEAR TREADING EACH OTHER TO DEATH.

"Will you have the goodness to sit in your mamma's thimble?" said the little mouse, "and then I shall have the honour to draw you."

"Dear me! will you take all that trouble yourself, madam?" said Hjalmar. And away they went to the mouse's wedding.

First of all they descended beneath the floor into a long passage that was only just high enough to admit of their driving through it with the thimble. The whole passage was lit up with phosphorescent wood.

"Does it not smell nice here?" asked the mouse that drew him. "The whole passage is smeared with rinds of bacon. Nothing can be more delicious."

They now came into the room where the wedding party was assembled. On the right side stood all the lady mice, who were whispering and gossiping, as if they were making game of each other. To the left stood the gentlemen mice, stroking their moustaches with their paws; and in the middle of the room were seen the bridal pair standing side by side in a scooped-out cheese-rind, and kissing each other most heartily before all the company, for they were betrothed, and were just about to be married.

More and more strangers kept arriving; the mice were near treading each other to death; and the bridal pair had placed themselves in the doorway, so that it was impossible to go in or to come out. The room had been daubed over with rinds of bacon like the passage, and that was all the refreshment offered to the guests; but at dessert they brought out a pea in which a mouse belonging to the family had bitten the name of the bride and bridegroom—that is to say, the first letter of their name. And this was something quite extraordinary.

All the mice declared that it was a very grand wedding, and that the entertainment had been very agreeable.

Hjalmar then went home. He had certainly been into very genteel society; but then, on the other hand, he had been obliged to creep into a little hole, and make himself small, and put on the uniform of the lead soldier.

FRIDAY

"IT is wonderful how many persons more advanced in years would like to have me come to them!" said Olé Luk-Oie, "especially those who have done bad actions. 'Dear little Olé,' say they, 'we cannot get a wink of sleep, and we lie the whole night long looking at all our wicked deeds that are sitting like so many ugly little kobolds on our bed, sprinkling hot water over us; do come and drive them away, that we may have a good night's rest.' And then they sigh so heavily. 'We would gladly pay you handsomely! Good night, Olé; the money lies on the window-seat.' But I wouldn't do it for money," added Olé Luk-Oie.

"What shall we do to-night?" asked Hjalmar.

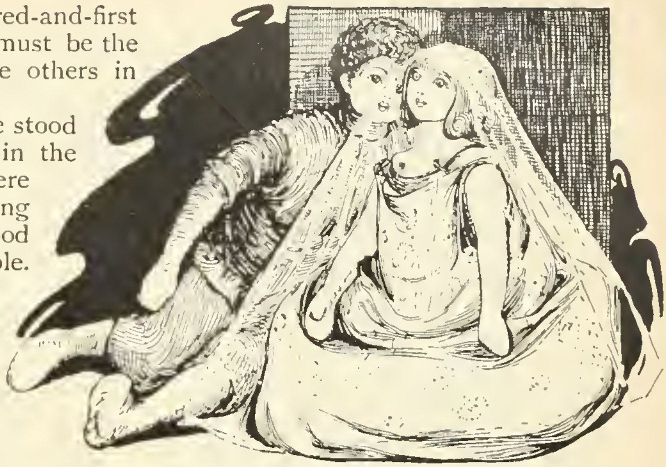
"Why, I don't know whether you'll care to go to another wedding to-night, though it is a different one from yesterday's. Your sister's large doll that looks like a man, and is called Hermann, is going to marry the doll Bertha. It is, moreover, the doll's birthday, and so they will receive a great many presents."

"Yes, I know," said Hjalmar. "Whenever the dolls wants new clothes, my sister is sure to celebrate their birthday or their wedding. This has happened, at least, a hundred times."

"So it has; only to-night is the hundred-and-first wedding; and when that has taken place, it must be the last; therefore, this one will surpass all the others in magnificence. Only look!"

Hjalmar turned towards the table. There stood the little pasteboard dolls'-house, with lights in the windows, and all the lead soldiers outside were presenting arms. The bridal pair were sitting on the floor in a pensive mood, as they had good cause to be, leaning against the leg of the table. But Olé Luk-Oie, dressed up in grandmamma's black gown, soon married them.

When the ceremony was over, all the furniture in the room joined in the following beautiful song, which the lead-pencil had written, and which was adapted to a military tattoo:



THE BRIDAL PAIR WERE SITTING ON THE FLOOR.

"Our song shall float upon the wind,
And celebrate the ties that bind
This bridal couple, stiff and blind,
Who both are made of white glove leather!
Hurrah! let's hope the deaf and blind
At least may live in peace together."

And they now received presents; but all eatables were prohibited, as love was their food.

"Shall we go to a country-seat, or shall we travel?" asked the bridegroom. And they consulted the swallow, who had travelled so much, and the old hen in the yard, who had sat upon five batches of chickens. The swallow told of beautiful warm climates, where large bunches of grapes hung heavily on the vines, where the air was so mild, and where the mountains are tinged with colours that we know nothing about here.

"But they haven't our red cabbage!" said the hen. "I was one whole summer in the country, with all my chickens; and there was a sand-pit, where we could walk about and scratch up the earth; and, besides this, we had admittance to a garden, where grew red cabbages. Oh, how nice they were! I can't imagine anything finer!"

"But one cabbage-stalk is as good as another," observed the swallow; "and we have bad weather so often here."

"Oh, yes; but we're accustomed to it," said the hen.

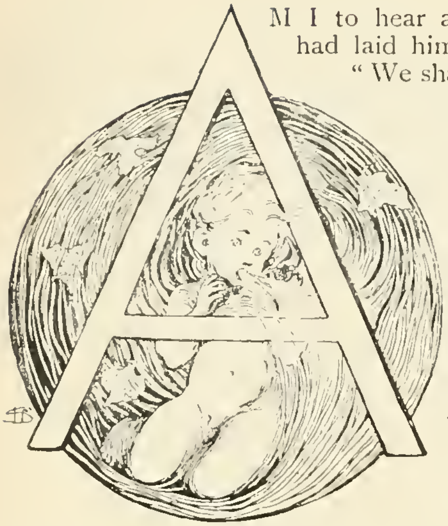
"But it is so cold here, and it freezes!"

"That is good for cabbages," said the hen; "besides, we have warm weather sometimes. Had not we a summer that lasted five whole weeks, some four years ago?—and wasn't it so hot one couldn't breathe? And then we have none of the venomous animals that they have yonder; and we are free from robbers. Wicked, indeed, must he be, who does not think our country the finest of any! Such an one does not deserve to be here!" And the hen then wept, and added, "I, too, have travelled. I once went above twelve miles in a tub. I can assure you there is no pleasure in travelling."

"The hen is a sensible person," said the doll Bertha. "I don't care, either, for travelling over mountains; it is but going up here and down there. No; let's go to the sand-pit in front of the gate, and then walk about in the cabbage-garden."

And this was accordingly agreed upon.

Saturday



"AM I to hear any stories?" asked little Hjalmar, as soon as Olé Luk-Oie had laid him to sleep.

"We shall not have time for any this evening," said Olé Luk-Oie, spreading his prettiest umbrella over the little boy. "Now, look at these Chinese." And the umbrella seemed like a large china bowl, with blue trees and pointed bridges, with little Chinese upon them, who stood nodding their heads. "We must put the whole world to rights, that it may look smart to-morrow," said Olé Luk-Oie; "for it will be a holiday, as it is Sunday. I must be off to the steeples, to see if the little elves that live in the church turrets have polished all the bells, so that they may sound prettily; I must go into the fields, and see if the wind has swept all the dust off the grass and leaves, and, what's the longest job of all, I must take down all the stars, to furbish them up a bit. I put them into my apron; but they have all to be numbered first, and the holes I take them from must be numbered likewise, in order that they may be put back into the same places, or else they would not stick fast, and then we should have too many falling stars, as they would all tumble down one after the other."

"I say, Master Olé Luk-Oie," cried an old portrait, that hung on the wall against which was placed Hjalmar's bed, "I am Hjalmar's great grandfather. I am obliged to you for telling the boy stories; only you must not warp his understanding. The stars cannot be taken down and polished. The stars are spheres like our earth, and that is their principal merit."

"Thank you, old great-grandfather!" said Olé Luk-Oie—"thank you! You are unquestionably the head of the family, and a very aged head, too; but I happen to be older still than you. I am an ancient heathen. The Greeks and Romans used to call me the God of Dreams. I have been into the highest houses, and still visit such to this day. I know how to behave towards the humblest, as well as towards the greatest, upon earth. So you may just tell stories yourself, if you please." And Olé Luk-Oie went away, taking his umbrella with him.

"Well, well! I suppose next, one must not even give one's opinion," grumbled the old portrait.

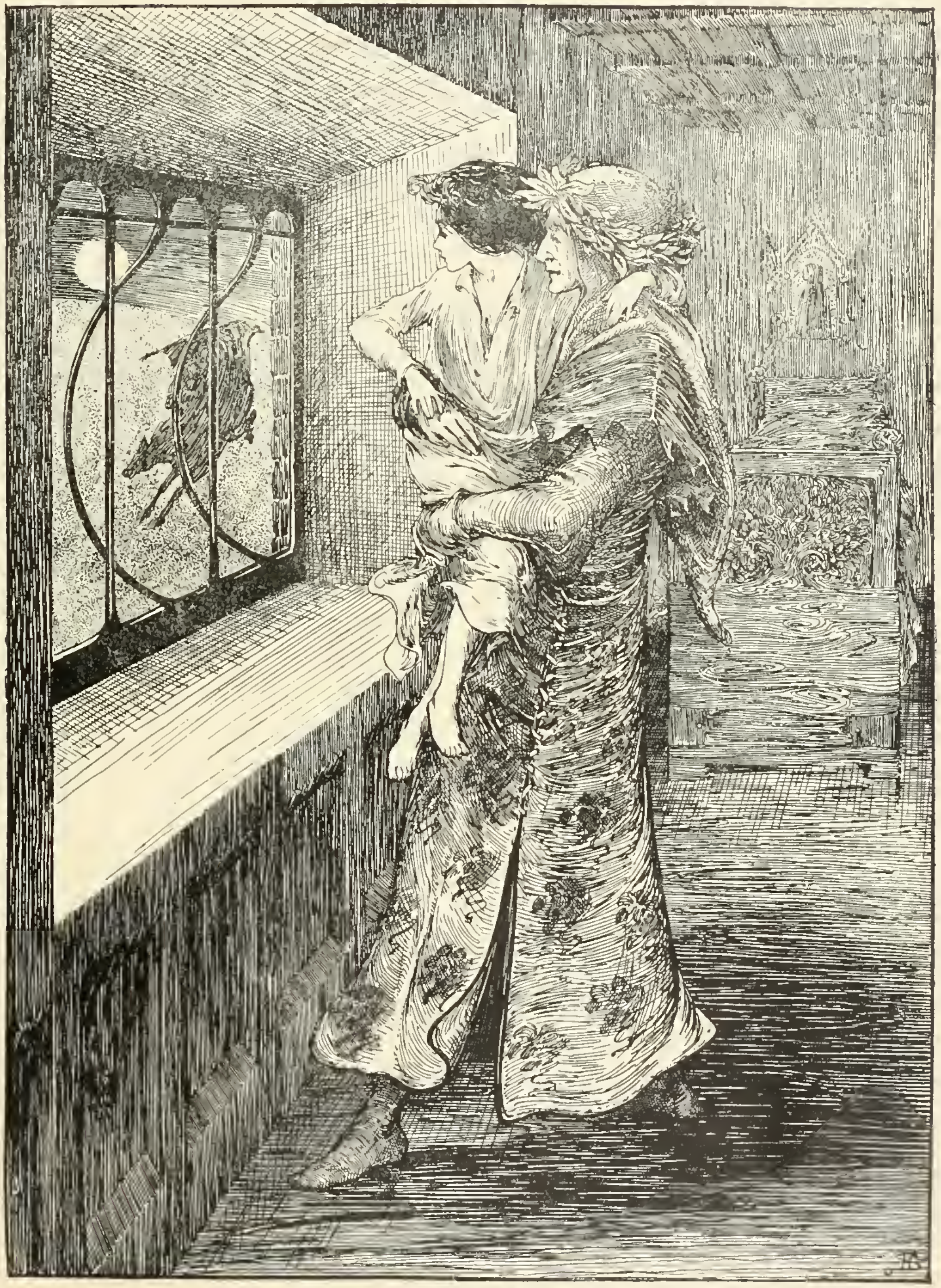
And thereupon Hjalmar awoke.

Sunday

"GOOD evening!" said Olé Luk-Oie; and Hjalmar nodded, and sprang forward and turned his great-grandfather's picture to the wall, that it might not interrupt them as it did yesterday.

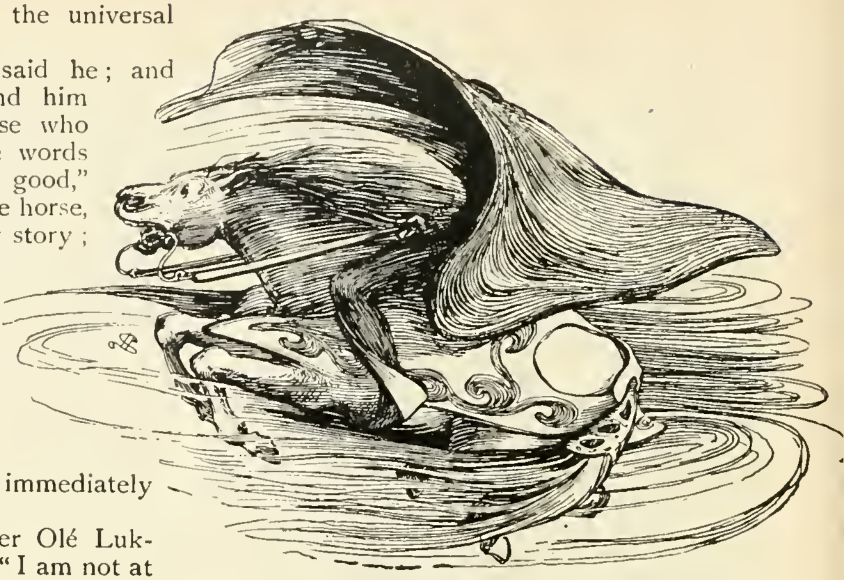
"Now you must tell me the stories of the five green peas that lived in a pod, and of the ranunculus that made love to the chick-weed, and of the darning-needle that was so grand that it fancied itself a sewing-needle."

"One may have too much of a good thing," said Olé Luk-Oie. "You know that I like better to show you something; so I'll show you my brother. His name is Olé Luk-Oie, like mine; but he never comes to anybody more than once; and whomsoever he comes to, he takes him away on his horse, and tells him stories. He only knows two stories, however, one of which is so wonderfully beautiful, that nobody in the world can imagine anything like it; and the other so ugly and so frightful, that it is beyond description!" And then Olé Luk-Oie lifted little Hjalmar up to the window, and said. "There, now, you may see my brother, the other Olé Luk-Oie, who is likewise called Death. You may perceive that he does not look as dreadful as in the picture-books, where he is only a skeleton. No, his clothes are embroidered with silver, and he wears a most splendid hussar's uniform ; a black velvet mantle flies behind him over his horse. Only look how he gallops along!"



OLÉ LUK-OIE LIFTED LITTLE HJALMAR UP TO THE WINDOW.

And Hjalmar saw this Olé Luk-Oie rode on, taking up both young and old, and carrying them away on his horse. He placed some before, and others behind ; but he always inquired first, "How stands your book of merit?"



"LOOK HOW HE GALLOPS ALONG."

"Very satisfactorily," was the universal answer.

"Let me see it myself," said he; and then they were obliged to hand him over the book. And all those who could show upon its pages the words "Very good," or "Remarkably good," were placed on the front of the horse, and were treated to the pretty story; while those who could show nothing but the words "Tolerably good," or "Middling," were obliged to sit behind, and were forced to hear the frightful story, while they trembled and cried, and would fain have jumped down from the horse; but they could not, for they had immediately grown rooted to it.

"Why, Death is the prettier Olé Luk-Oie of the two," said Hjalmar. "I am not at all afraid of him."

"No more you need be," said Olé Luk-Oie, "if you only mind and keep a good book of merit."

"Now, that I call something instructive," murmured the great-grandfather's picture. "It is some use, after all, to speak one's mind." And he felt quite satisfied.

So that is the story of Olé Luk-Oie; and now let us hope he will himself tell you some others this evening.

* * *

The Emperor's New Clothes

MANY years ago there lived an emperor, who was so fond of having new clothes that he spent all his money upon dress and finery. He did not trouble himself about his army, nor had he any taste for theatrical amusements, nor did he care even to drive out, except it was to show his new clothes. He had a coat for every hour in the day; and just as in other countries they say of a king, "His majesty is in his council-chamber," they said of him, "The emperor is in his dressing-room."

The large city which he inhabited was very gay, and was daily visited by numerous foreigners. One day, there came, amongst the rest, a couple of impostors, who gave themselves out as weavers, and pretended that they could weave the most beautiful stuff imaginable. Not only were the colours and the pattern of remarkable beauty, but the clothes made of this material possessed the wonderful quality of being invisible to the eyes of such persons as were either not fit for the office they held, or were irremediably stupid.

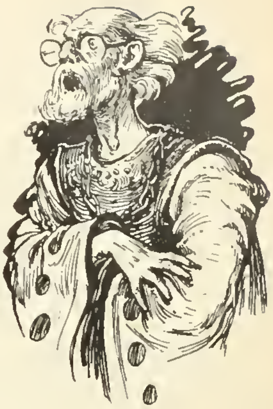
"Those would, indeed, be valuable clothes," thought the emperor; "for when I put them on I should be able to find out which men in my empire are unfit for their offices, and I should be able to distinguish the wise from the stupid ones. I must have some of this stuff woven for me directly." And he gave the two impostors a handsome sum as earnest-money to begin their work with.

They then put up two looms, and did as if they were at work, though there was nothing whatever upon the looms. They next asked for the finest silk that could be had, and the most splendid gold thread; all of which they put into their pockets, and continued working at the empty looms till late at night.

"I should like to know how they are getting on with the stuff," thought the emperor. Yet he felt some misgivings when he recollected that stupid persons, or such as were unfit for their office, could not see the material; and though he trusted that he had nothing to fear personally, still he preferred sending some one else to see how the matter stood. All the inhabitants of the town had heard of the singular properties of the stuff, and everybody was curious to see how unfit or how stupid his neighbour might be.

"I will send my worthy old minister to the weavers," thought the emperor; "he is best capable of judging of this stuff, for he has a great deal of good sense, and nobody is more fit for his office than he."

The good old minister accordingly went into the room where the two impostors sat working at the empty looms. "Mercy on us!" thought the old minister, staring with all his might; "I can see nothing at all." But he took care not to say so.


STARING AS HARD AS HE COULD.

The two impostors requested him to step nearer, and asked if he did not think the pattern very pretty, and the colours extremely beautiful. They then pointed to the empty loom, while the poor old minister kept staring as hard as he could, but without being able to see what in fact, was not there to be seen. "Have mercy on us!" thought he; "can I be so stupid, after all? I never thought myself so, and I must not let any one know it. Can I be unfit for my office? No! it will never do for me to own that I could not see the stuff."

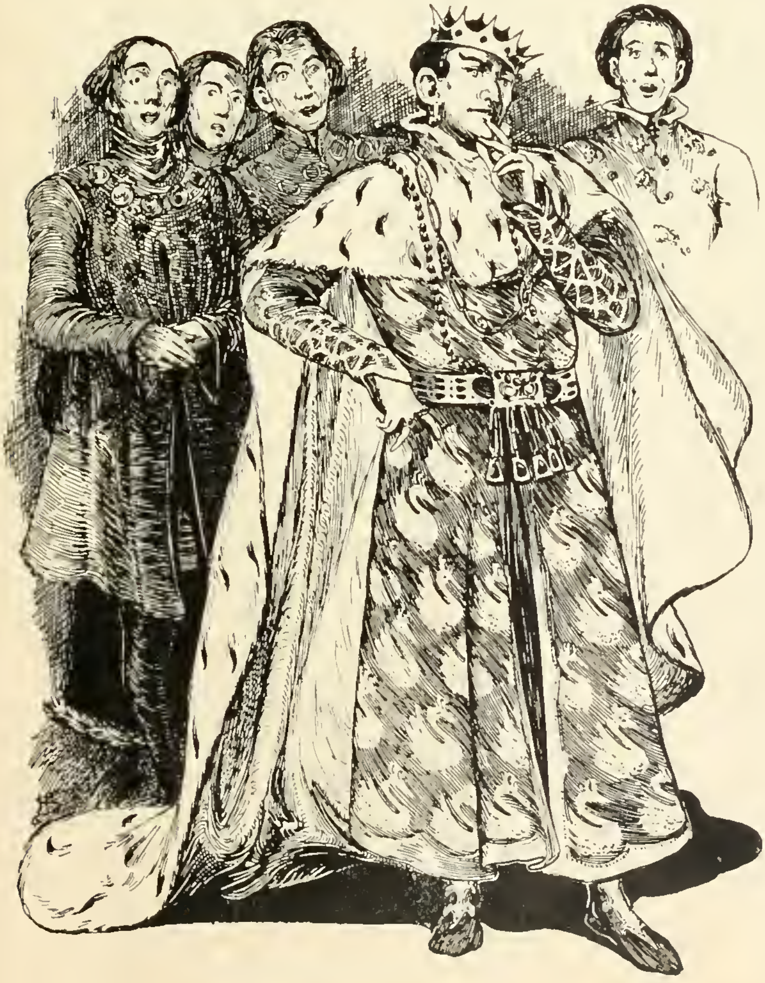
"You have not told us what you think of our stuff," said one of the weavers.

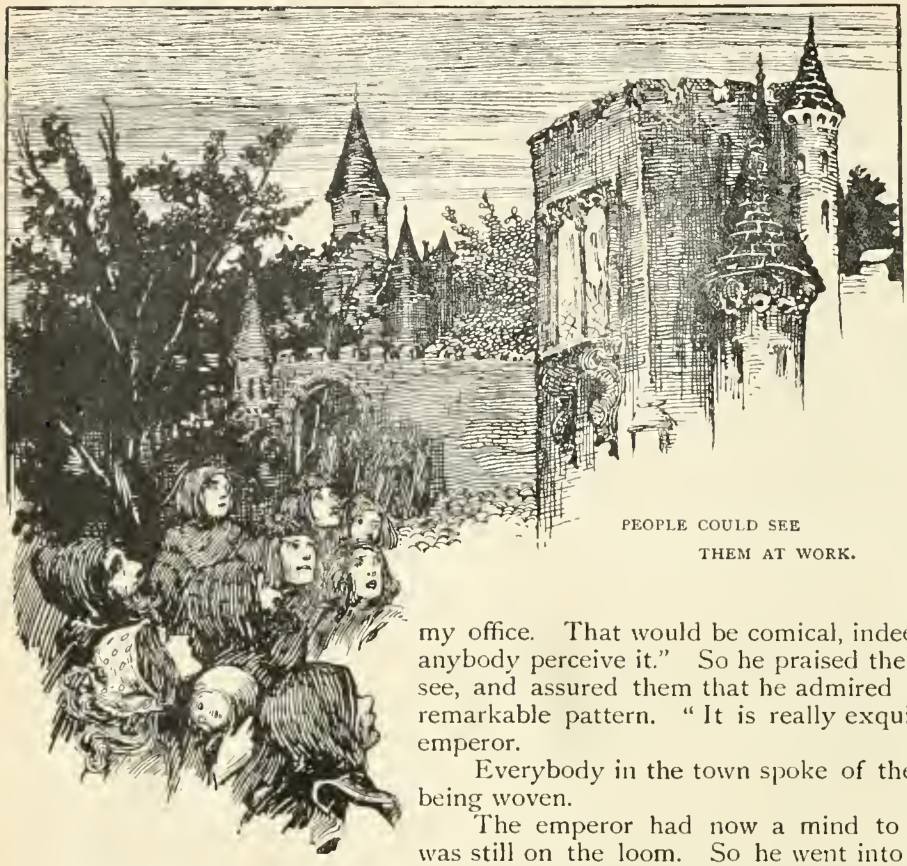
"Oh! it is most elegant—most lovely!" answered the minister, looking through his spectacles; "both the pattern and the colours. I shall be sure to tell the emperor how pleased I am with the stuff."

"We are delighted to hear you say so," observed the weavers; and hereupon they mentioned the names of the colours, and explained the peculiarities of the pattern. The old minister listened very attentively, in order to be able to repeat what they said to the emperor, which he accordingly did.

The two impostors now asked for more money, more silk, and more gold, to go on with their work. They put it all into their pockets, as before, and not a thread was fastened to either shuttle, though they continued pretending to work at the empty looms.

The emperor soon sent another honourable statesman to see how the


IT HAS OUR MOST GRACIOUS APPROVAL.



PEOPLE COULD SEE THEM AT WORK.

weaving was getting on, and whether the stuff would soon be ready. The same thing happened to him as had befallen the minister. He looked and looked, and as there was nothing but an empty loom, he could not contrive to see anything.

"Is not this a beautiful stuff?" asked the two impostors, pretending to show and expatiate on the beautiful pattern which was not there.

"I am not stupid," thought the statesman; "it would therefore seem I were unfit for my office. That would be comical, indeed; only I must not let anybody perceive it." So he praised the tissue which he did not see, and assured them that he admired its beautiful colours and remarkable pattern. "It is really exquisite," reported he to the emperor.

Everybody in the town spoke of the splendid stuff that was being woven.

The emperor had now a mind to see it himself, while it was still on the loom. So he went into the room where the two cunning impostors were working away at a great rate, without either woof or warp, followed by a retinue of picked men, amongst whom were the two worthy statesmen who had been there already.

"Is it not magnificent?" said the two latter. "Will your majesty be pleased just to examine the pattern and the colours?" And they pointed to the empty loom, concluding that those present would be able to see the tissue.

"Why, how's this?" thought the emperor. "I see nothing whatever. This is quite alarming. Can I be stupid? Am I not fit to be emperor? That would be the most shocking thing that could happen to me. Oh! it's very pretty!" cried he; "it has our most gracious approval." And he nodded condescendingly as he gazed at the empty loom, for he would not own that he saw nothing.

His whole retinue looked and looked in turn, but could not make anything more out of it than the others had done; still they repeated after the emperor, "Oh! it's very pretty!" And they advised him to wear these beautiful new clothes on the occasion of a grand procession that was about to take place.

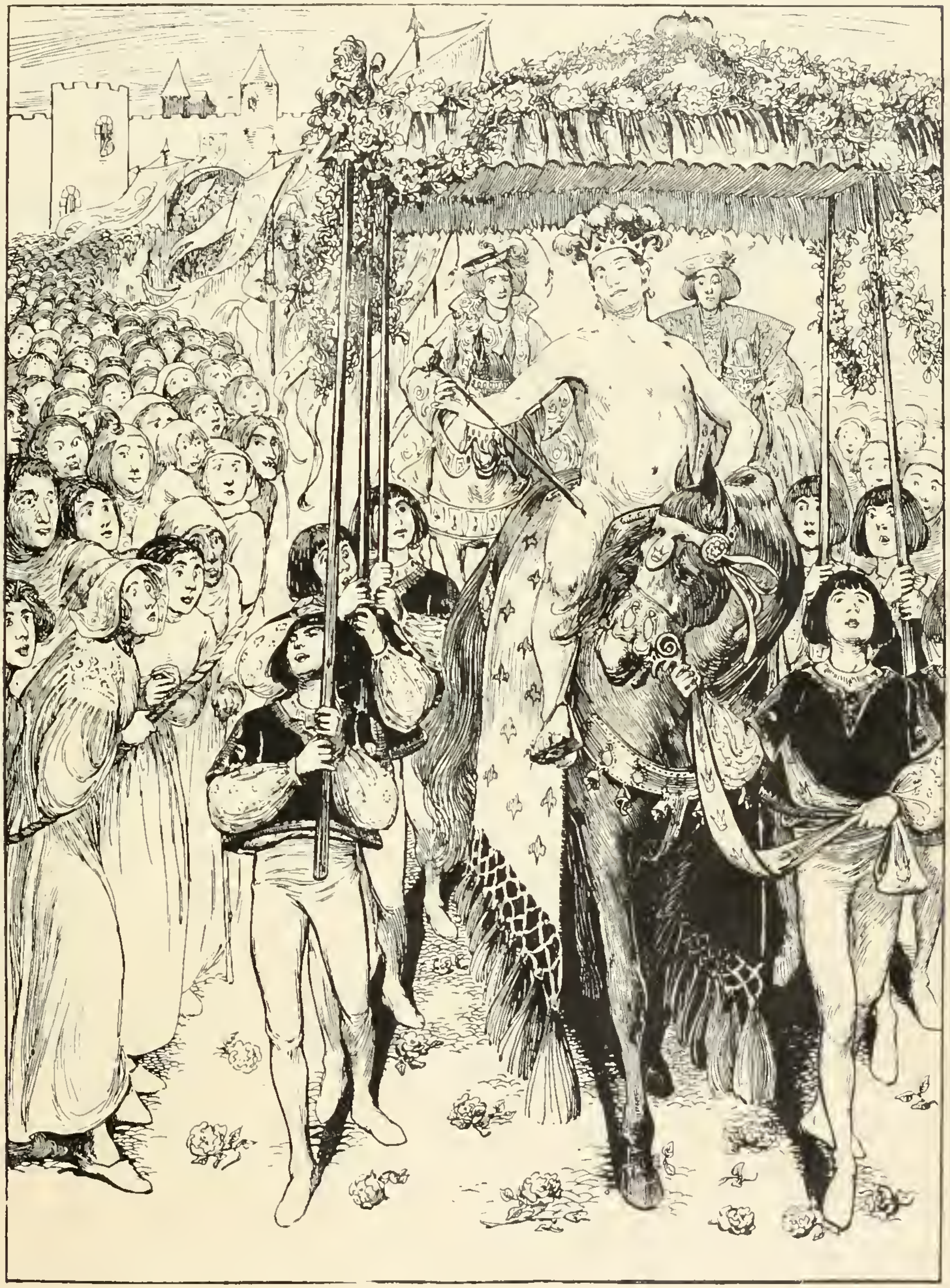
The words "elegant!" "splendid!" "magnificent!" were bandied about from mouth to mouth. Everybody seemed vastly delighted, and the emperor conferred on the two impostors the title of "weavers to the imperial court."

The two impostors sat up the whole of the night preceding the day on which the procession was to take place, and had lit up more than sixteen tapers. People could see them busy at work, finishing the emperor's new clothes. They imitated the action of taking the stuff off the loom; then they cut it out in the air with large scissors, and proceeded to sew the garments without either needles or thread, till at length they said: "The clothes are now ready."

The emperor then came in, accompanied by the principal lords of his court, when the two impostors each raised an arm as if they were holding something up, saying: "Here are the trunk-hose; here is the vest; here is the mantle"; and so forth. "The tissue is as light as a cobweb, and one might fancy one had nothing on; but that is just its greatest beauty."

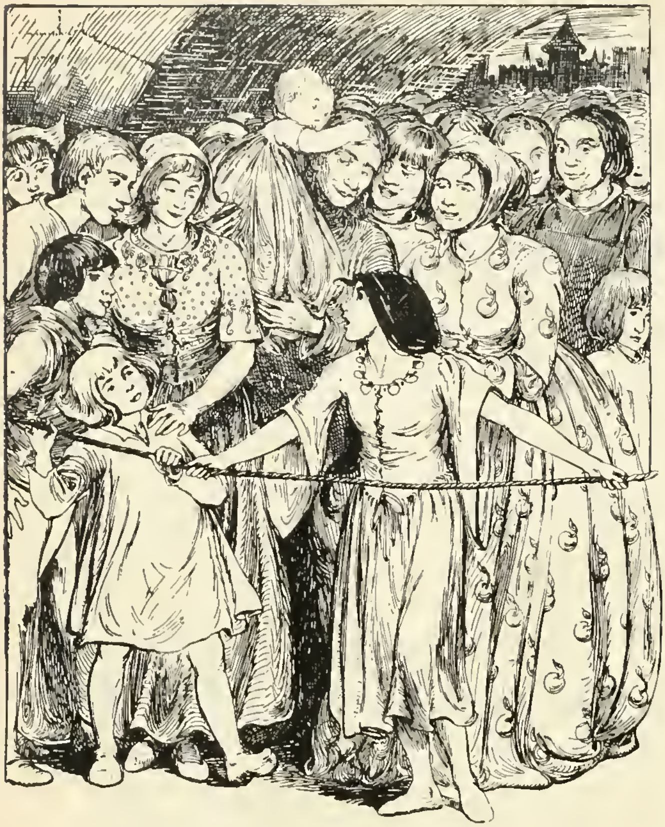
"So it is," said the courtiers; though they could see nothing, as nothing was there to be seen.

"Will your imperial majesty be graciously pleased to take off your clothes?" said the impostors; "and we will dress you in the new ones before this large glass."



THE EMPEROR WENT FORTH IN GRAND PROCESSION.

The emperor accordingly took off all his clothes, and the impostors made believe to put on each of the new garments they had just finished; while his majesty turned and twisted himself round before the looking-glass.



"BUT HE HAS GOT NOTHING ON!"

"How capitally the clothes fit!" said all present. "What a beautiful pattern, and what vivid colours! What a costly attire!"

"They are waiting outside with the canopy that is to be carried over your majesty's head in the procession," said the master of the ceremonies, now coming in.

"I am quite ready, as you may perceive," answered the emperor. "My dress fits nicely—does it not?" added he, turning once more to the glass, to make it appear as if he were examining its beauties most minutely.

The lords of the bedchamber, who were to bear the train, pretended to pick it up from the floor with both hands, and then did as if they were holding something in the air; for they did not venture to show that they saw nothing.

The emperor then went forth, in grand procession, under the splendid canopy, while the people in the street, and others at their windows, all exclaimed: "Dear me! how incomparably beautiful are the emperor's new clothes! What a fine train he has, and how well it is cut!" No one, in short, would let his neighbour think that he saw nothing, for it would have been like declaring himself unfit for his office, whatever that might be, or, at best, extremely stupid. None of the emperor's clothes had ever met with such universal approbation as these.

"But he has got nothing on!" cried at length one little child.

"Only listen to that innocent creature," said the father; and the child's remark was whispered from one to the other as a piece of laughable simplicity.

"But he has got nothing on!" cried at length the whole crowd.

This startled the emperor, for he had an inkling that they were in the right, after all; but he thought: "I must, nevertheless, face it out till the end, and go on with the procession."

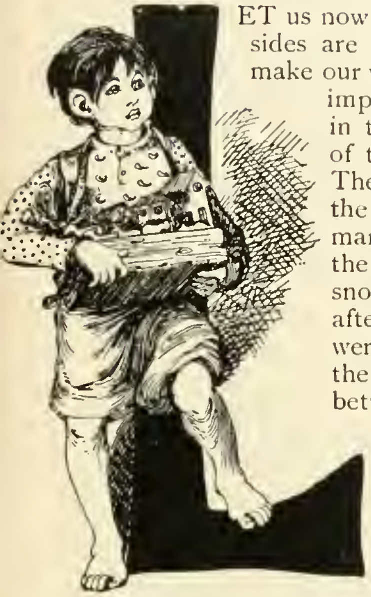
And the lords-in-waiting went on marching as stiffly as ever, and carrying the train that did not exist.

* * *

The Ice-Maiden; or, The Eagle's Nest

I

LITTLE RUDY

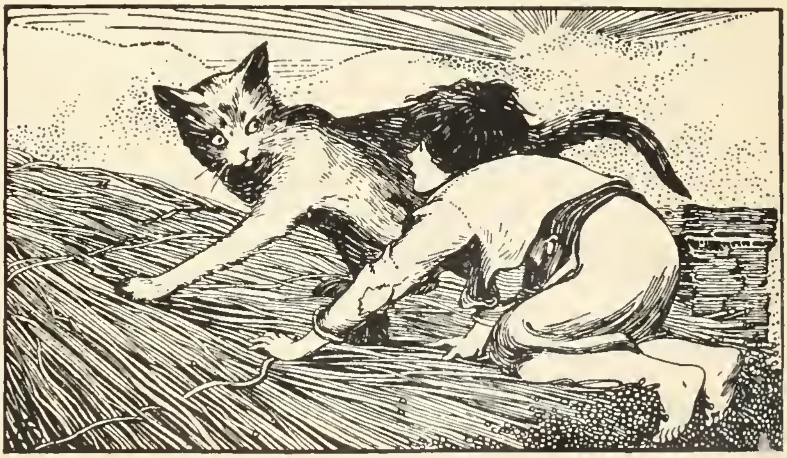


LET us now go to Switzerland, and see its wonderful mountains, whose steep, rocky sides are covered with trees. We will climb up to the fields of snow, and then make our way down to the grassy valleys, with their countless streams and rivulets, impetuously rushing to lose themselves in the sea. The sunshine is hot in the narrow valley; the snow becomes firm and solid, and in the course of time it either descends as an avalanche, or creeps along as a glacier. There are two of these glaciers in the valleys below the Schreckhorn and the Wetterhorn, near the long village of Grindelwald. They are a remarkable sight, and therefore many travellers from all countries come in the summer to visit them: they come over the high mountains covered with snow, they traverse the deep valleys; and to do this they must climb, hour after hour, leaving the valley far beneath them, till they see it as if they were in an air-balloon. The clouds hang above them like thick mists over the mountains, and the sun's rays make their way through the openings between the clouds to where the brown houses lie spread, lighting up some chance spot with a vivid green. Below, the stream foams and blusters; but above it murmurs and ripples, and looks like a band of silver hanging down the side of the rock.

On either side of the path up the mountain lie wooden houses. Each house has its little plot of potatoes; and this they all require, for there are many children, and they all have good appetites. The children come out to meet every stranger, whether walking or riding, and ask him to buy their carved wooden châlets, made like the houses they live in. Be it fine or be it wet, the children try to sell their carvings.

About twenty years since you might have seen one little boy standing apart from the others, but evidently very desirous to dispose of his wares. He looked grave and sad, and held his little tray tightly with both hands as if he was afraid of losing it. This serious look and his small size caused him to be much noticed by travellers, who often called him and purchased many of his toys, though he did not know why he was so favoured. His grandfather lived two miles off among the mountains, where he did his carving. He had a cabinet full of the things he had made. There were nut-crackers, knives and forks, boxes carved with leaves and chamois, and many toys for children; but little Rudy cared for nothing so much as for an old gun, hanging from a rafter in the ceiling, for his grandfather had told him it should be his own when he was big enough to know how to use it.

Though the boy was little, he was set in charge of the goats; and Rudy could climb as high as any of his flock, and was fond of climbing tall trees after birds' nests. He was brave and high-spirited, but he never smiled except when he watched the foaming cataract, or heard the thundering roar of an avalanche. He never joined in the children's games,



"COME WITH ME ON THE ROOF," SAID THE CAT.

and only met them when his grandfather sent him to sell his carvings; and this employment Rudy did not much like. He would rather wander alone amongst the mountains, or sit by his grandfather while he told him stories of former ages, or of the people who lived at Meiringen, from whence he had come. He told him they had not always lived there, but had come from a distant northern country called Sweden. Rudy took great pride in this knowledge; but he also learnt much from his four-footed friends. He had a large dog, named Ajola, who had been his father's; and he had also a tom-cat who was his particular friend, for it was from him he had learnt how to climb.

"Come with me on the roof," the cat said to him; for when children have not learnt to talk, they can understand the speech of birds and animals quite as well as that of their father and mother; but that is only while they are very little, and their grandfather's stick seems as good as a live horse, with head, legs, and tail. Some children lose this later than others, and we call them backward. People say such funny things!

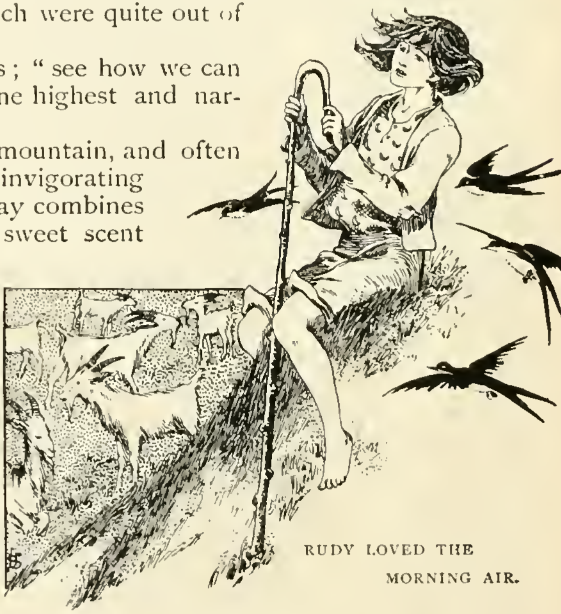
"Come with me, little Rudy, on the roof," was one of the first things the cat had said which Rudy had understood: "it is all imagination about falling; you don't fall if you are not afraid. Come; put one of your paws so, and the other so! Feel for yourself with your forepaws! Use your eyes and be active; and if there's a crevice, just spring and take firm hold, as I do!"

Rudy did as he was told, and you might often have seen him sitting beside the cat on the top of the roof; afterwards they climbed together to the tops of the trees, and Rudy even found his way to the rocky ledges which were quite out of the cat's reach.

"Higher! higher!" said the trees and the bushes; "see how we can climb. We stretch upwards, and take firm hold of the highest and narrowest ledges of the rocks."

So Rudy found his way to the very top of the mountain, and often got up there before sunrise; for he enjoyed the pure invigorating air, fresh from the hands of the Creator, which men say combines the delicate perfume of the mountain herbs with the sweet scent of the wild thyme and the mint found in the valley. The grosser part of it is taken up by the clouds, and as they are carried by the winds, the lofty trees catch the fragrance and make the air pure and fresh. And so Rudy loved the morning air.

The happy sunbeams kissed his cheek, and Giddiness, who was always near, was afraid to touch him; the swallows, who had built seven little nests under his grandfather's eaves, circled about him and his goats, singing: "We and you! and you and we!" They reminded him of his home, his grandfather, and of the fowls; but although the fowls lived with them in the same house, Rudy had never made friends with them.

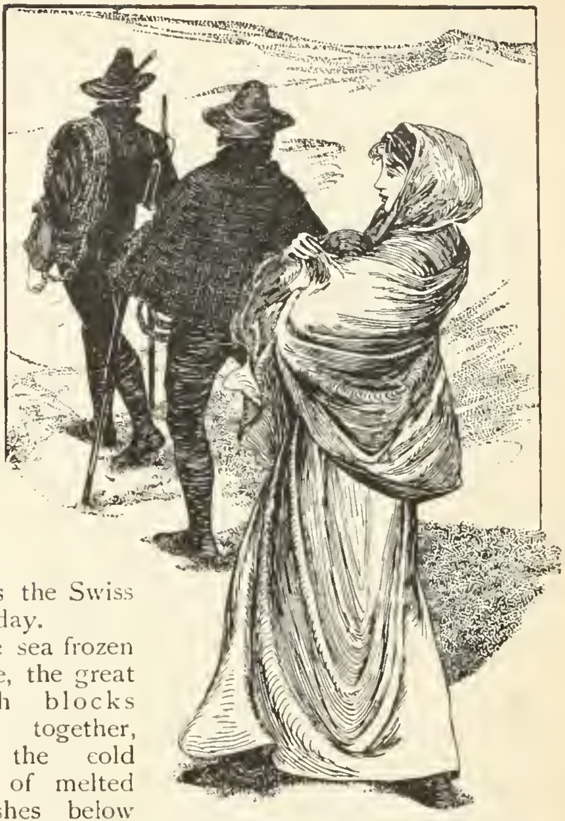


RUDY LOVED THE MORNING AIR.

Although he was such a little boy, he had already travelled a considerable distance. His birthplace was in the canton of Vallais, whence he had been brought over the mountains to where he now lived. He had even made his way on foot to the Staubbach, which descends through the air gleaming like silver below the snow-clad mountain called the Jungfrau. He had also been to the great glacier at Grindelwald; but that was a sad story. His mother lost her life at that spot; and Rudy's grandfather said that it was there he had lost his happy spirits. Before he was a twelvemonth old his mother used to say that he laughed more than he cried, but since he had been rescued from the crevasse in the ice, a different spirit seemed to have possession of him. His grandfather would not talk of it, but every one in that district knew the story.

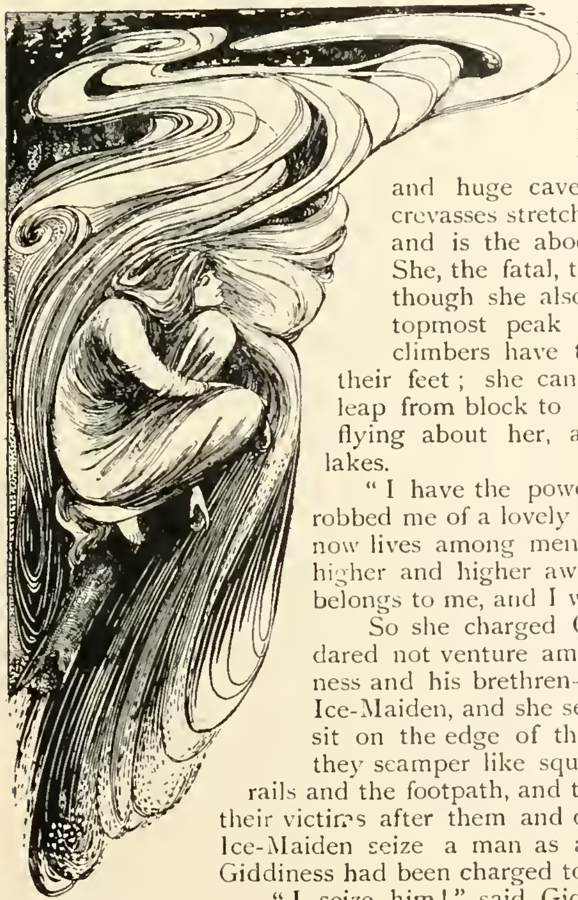
Rudy's father had been a postillion. The large dog, which was now lying in the grandfather's room, was his constant companion when travelling over the Simplon on his way to the Lake of Geneva. Some of his relations lived in the Valley of the Rhone, in the canton of Vallais. His uncle was a successful chamois-hunter and an experienced guide. When Rudy was only a twelvemonth old, his father died, and his mother now wished to return to her own relations in the Bernese Oberland. Her father lived not many miles from Grindelwald; he was able to maintain himself by wood-carving. So she started on her journey in the month of June, with her child in her arms, and in the company of two chamois-hunters, over the Gemmi towards Grindelwald.

They had accomplished the greater part of their journey, had passed the highest ridge and reached the snow-field, and were now come in sight of the valley where her home was, with its well-remembered wooden houses, but still had to cross one great glacier. It was covered with recent snow, which hid a crevasse which was much deeper than the height of a man, although it did not extend to where the water rushed below the glacier. The mother, while carrying her baby, slipped, fell into the cleft, and disappeared from sight. She did not utter a sound, but they could hear the child crying. It was more than an hour before they could fetch ropes and poles from the nearest house, and recover what seemed to be two corpses from the cleft in the ice. They tried every possible means, and succeeded in restoring the child, but not his mother, to life; so the old man had his daughter's son brought into his home, a little orphan, the boy who used to laugh more than he cried; but he seemed to be entirely changed, and this change was made down in the crevasse, in the cold world of ice, where, as the Swiss peasants think, lost souls are imprisoned until Doomsday.



THEY STILL HAD TO CROSS ONE GREAT GLACIER.

The immense glacier looks like the waves of the sea frozen into ice, the great greenish blocks heaped together, while the cold stream of melted ice rushes below towards the valley, and huge caverns and immense crevasses stretch far away beneath it. It is like a palace of glass, and is the abode of the Ice-Maiden, the Queen of the Glaciers. She, the fatal, the overwhelming one, is in part a spirit of the air, though she also rules over the river; therefore she can rise to the topmost peak of the snow mountain, where the adventurous climbers have to cut every step in the ice before they can place their feet; she can float on the smallest branch down the torrent, and leap from block to block with her white hair and her pale blue robe flying about her, and resembling the water in the beautiful Swiss lakes.



THE QUEEN OF THE GLACIERS.
PT. III.

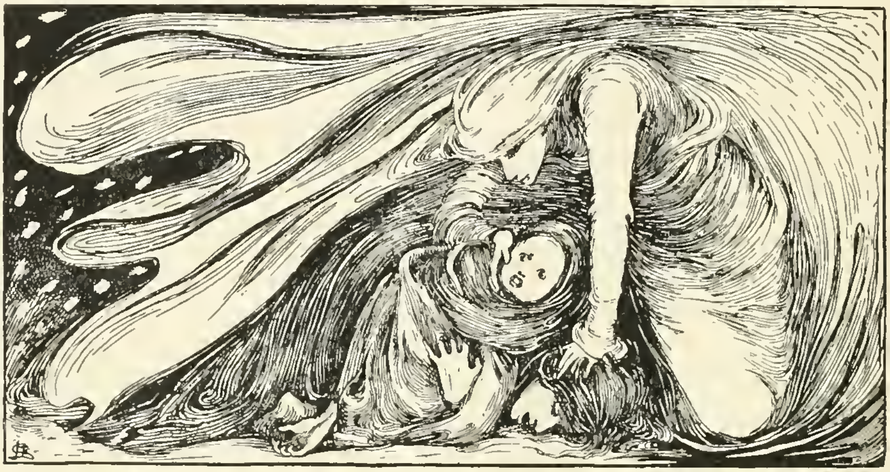
"I have the power to crush and to seize!" she cries. "They have robbed me of a lovely boy whom I have kissed, but have not killed. He now lives among men: he keeps his goats amid the hills, he ever climbs higher and higher away from his fellows, but not away from me. He belongs to me, and I will again have him!"

So she charged Giddiness to seize him for her, for the Ice-Maiden dared not venture among the woods in the hot summer time; and Giddiness and his brethren—for there are many of them—mounted up to the Ice-Maiden, and she selected the strongest of them for her purpose. They sit on the edge of the staircase, and on the rails at the top of the tower; they scamper like squirrels on the ridge of the rock, they leap from the rails and the footpath, and tread the air like a swimmer treading water, to tempt their victims after them and dash them into the abyss. Both Giddiness and the Ice-Maiden seize a man as an octopus seizes all within its reach. And now Giddiness had been charged to seize little Rudy.

"I seize him!" said Giddiness; "I cannot. The miserable cat has taught him all her tricks. The boy possesses a power which keeps me from him; I cannot seize him even when he hangs by a branch above the precipice. I should be delighted to tickle his feet, or pitch him headlong through the air ; but I cannot ! "

" We will succeed between us," said the Ice-Maiden. " Thou or I ! I ! I ! "

" No, no ! " an unseen voice replied, sounding like distant church bells ; the joyful singing of good spirits—the Daughters of the Sun. These float above the mountain every evening ; they expand their rosy wings which glow more and more like fire as the sun nears to setting over the snowy peaks. People call it the "Alpine glow." And after sunset they withdraw into the snow and rest there until sunrise, when they again show themselves. They love flowers, and butterflies, and human beings ; and they were particularly fond of Rudy.


THE COLD KISSES WHICH THE QUEEN OF THE GLACIERS HAD GIVEN HIM.

" You shall never catch him—you shall never have him," said they.

" I have captured bigger and stronger boys than he," said the Ice-Maiden.

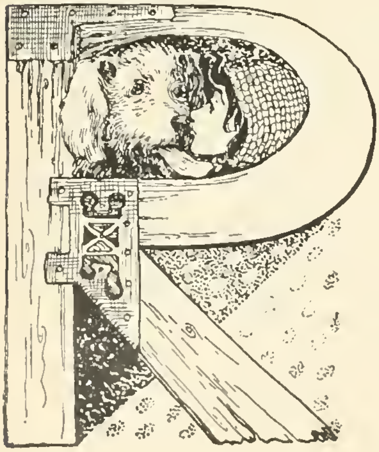
The Daughters of the Sun now sang a song of a traveller whose cloak was carried away by the storm : " The storm took the cloak, but not the man. You can grasp at him, but not hold him, ye strong ones. He is stronger, he is more spiritual than we are ! He will ascend above the sun, our mother ! He has the power to bind the winds and the waves, and make them serve him and do his bidding. If you unloose the weight that holds him down, you will set him free to rise yet higher."

Thus ran the chorus which sounded like distant church bells.

Each morning the sunbeams shone through the little window of the grandfather's house, and lighted on the silent boy. The Daughters of the Sun kissed him, and tried to thaw the cold kisses which the Queen of the Glaciers had given him, while he was in the arms of his dead mother, in the deep crevasse, whence he had been so wonderfully rescued.

II

GOING TO THE NEW HOME



RUDY was now a boy of eight. His uncle, who lived in the Rhone valley at the other side of the mountains, wished him to come to him, and learn how to make his way in the world ; his grandfather approved of this, and let him go.

Rudy therefore said good-bye. He had to take leave of others besides his grandfather ; and the first of these was his old dog, Ajola.

" When your father was postillion, I was his post-dog," said Ajola. " We travelled backwards and forwards together ; and I know some dogs at the other side of the mountains and some of the people. I was never a chatterer ; but now that we are not likely to have many more chances of talking, I want to tell you a few things. I will tell you something I have had in my head and thought over for a long time. I can't make it out, and you won't make it out ; but that doesn't matter. At least I can see that things are not fairly divided in this world, whether for dogs or for men. Only a few are privileged to sit in a lady's lap and have milk to drink. I've never been used to it myself, but I've seen a little lap-dog riding in the coach, and occupying the place of a passenger. The lady to whom it belonged, or who belonged to it, took a bottle of milk with her for the dog to drink; and she offered him sweets, but he sniffed at them and refused them, so she ate them herself. I had to run in the mud beside the coach, and was very hungry, thinking all the time that this couldn't be right; but they say that there are a great many things that aren't right. Would you like to sit in a lady's lap and ride in a carriage? I wish you could. But you can't arrange that for yourself. I never could, bark and howl as I might!"

This is what Ajola said; and Rudy put his arms round him, and kissed his cold, wet nose. Then he took up the cat, but puss tried to get away, and said,—

"You're too strong! and I don't want to scratch you. Climb over the mountains, as I taught you. Don't fancy you can fall, and then you will always keep firm hold." As he said this, the cat ran away; for he did not wish Rudy to see that he was crying.

The fowls strutted about the room. One of them had lost its tail feathers. A tourist, who imagined he was a sportsman, had shot its tail off, as he thought it was a wild bird.

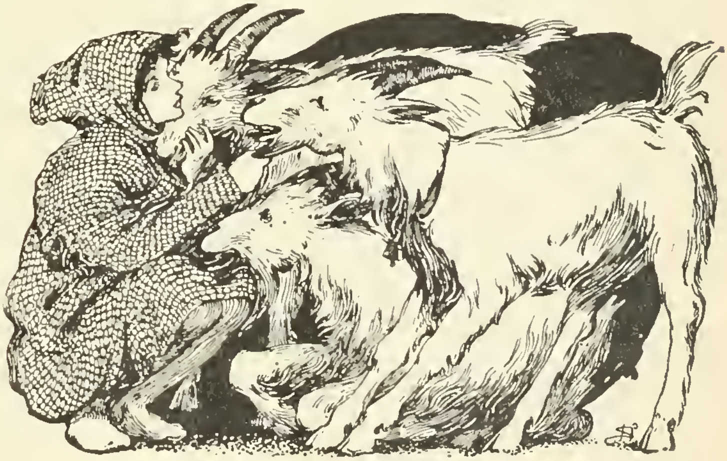
"Rudy is going away over the mountains," said one of the fowls.

The other one replied, "He's in too great a hurry; I don't want to say good-bye." And then they both made off.

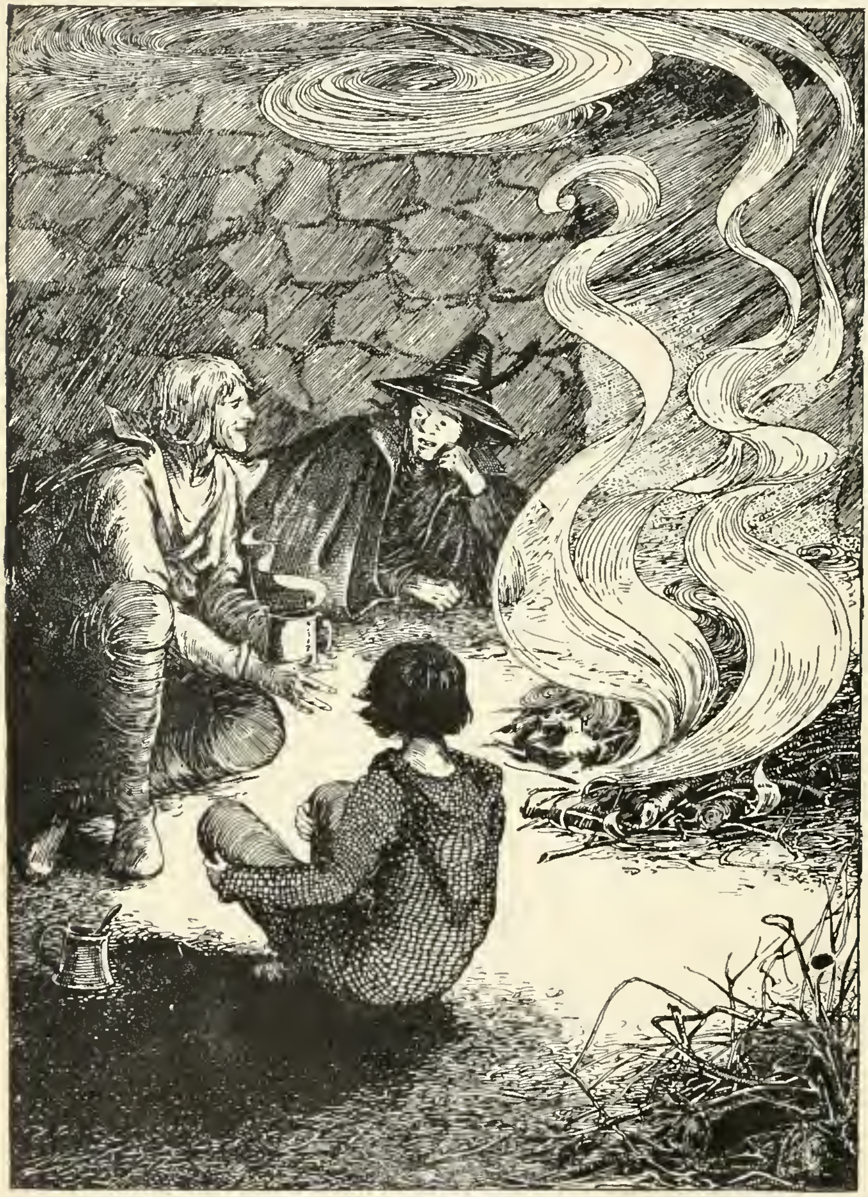
He then said good-bye to the goats; they bleated "Med! med! may!" and that made him feel sad.

Two neighbouring guides, who wanted to cross the mountains to beyond the Gemmi, took Rudy with them, going on foot. It was a fatiguing walk for such a little boy; but he was strong, and never feared anything.

The swallows flew part of the way with them. "We and you! and you and we!" they sang. Their route lay across the roaring Lütschine, which flows in many little streams from the Grindel glacier, and some fallen trees served for a bridge. When they gained the forest at the other side, they began to mount the slope where the glacier had quitted the mountain, and then they had to climb over or make their way round the blocks of ice on the glacier. Rudy sometimes was obliged to crawl instead of walking; but his eyes sparkled with pleasure, and he planted his feet so firmly that you would think he wanted to leave the mark of his spiked shoes behind him at every step. The dark earth which the mountain torrent had scattered over the glacier made it look almost black, but still you could catch sight of the bluish-green ice. They had to skirt the countless little pools which lay amongst the huge blocks of ice; and sometimes they passed by a great stone that had rested at the edge of a cleft, and then the stone would be upset, and crash down into the crevasse, and the echoes would reverberate from all the deep clefts in the glacier.


THEY BLEATED "MED! MED! MAY!"

So they went on climbing. The mighty glacier seemed like a great river frozen into ice, hemmed in by the steep rocks. Rudy remembered what he had been told, of how he and his mother had been pulled up out of one of those deep, cold crevasses; but he soon thought no more of it, and it seemed no more than many other stories which he had been told. Occasionally, when the men thought the path too rough for the boy, they offered him a hand; but he was not easily tired, and stood on the ice as securely as a chamois. Now they got on rock, and clambered over the rough stones; then they would have to walk through the pine-trees, or over pasture-lands, whilst the landscape was constantly changing. Around them were the great snow mountains—the Jungfrau, the Mönch, and the Eiger. Every child knew their names, and, of course, Rudy knew them. Rudy had never before been up so high; he had never walked over the wide snow-fields: like the ocean with its waves immovable, the wind now and again blowing off some of the snow as if it were the foam of the sea. The glaciers meet here as if they were joining hands; each forms one of the palaces of the Ice-Maiden, whose power and aim is to capture and overwhelm. The sunshine was hot, the snow was brilliantly white, and seemed to sparkle as if covered with diamonds. Countless insects, most of them butterflies or bees, were lying dead on the snow; they had gone up too high, or been carried by the wind, and had been frozen to death. A threatening cloud hung over the Wetterhorn, looking like a bundle of black wool; it hung down, heavy with its own weight, ready to burst with the resistless force of a whirlwind. The recollection of this whole journey—the encamping for the night at such a height, the walk in the dark, the deep clefts in the rock, worn away by the force of water during countless years—all this was fixed in Rudy's memory.



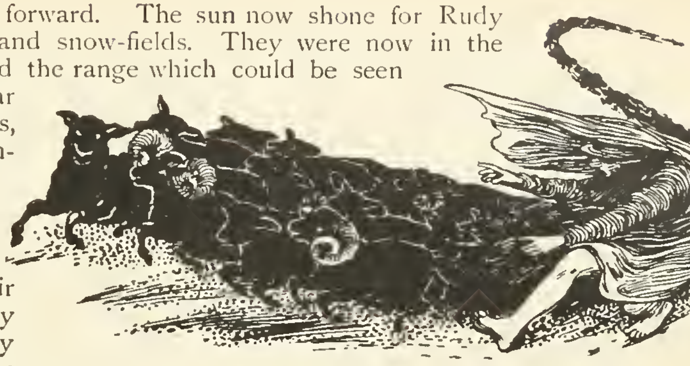
BEGAN TO TELL TALES AND LEGENDS OF THE SPIRITS OF THE ALPS.

An empty stone hut beyond the *mer de glace* gave them shelter for the night. Here they found pine branches for fuel, and they quickly made a fire and arranged the bed as comfortably as they could. They then seated themselves about the fire, lighted their pipes, and drank the hot drink which they had prepared. They gave Rudy some of their supper, and then began to tell tales and legends of the spirits of the Alps; of the mighty serpents that lay coiled in the lakes; of the spirits who were reported to have carried men in their sleep to the marvellous floating city, Venice; of the mysterious shepherd, who tended his black sheep on the mountain pastures, and how no one had seen him, although many had heard the tones of his bell and the bleating of his flock. Rudy listened to all this, though he was not frightened, as he did not know what fear was; and as he was listening he thought he heard the weird bleating; it grew more and more distinct till the men heard it too, and left off talking to listen, and told Rudy to keep awake.

This was the Föhn, the blast, the terrible tempest, which sweeps down from the mountains upon the valleys, rending the trees as if they were reeds, and sweeping away the houses by a flood as easily as one moves chessmen.

After a time they said to Rudy that it was all over, and he might go to sleep; and he was so tired with his long tramp that he obeyed at once.

When day broke, they pushed forward. The sun now shone for Rudy on new mountains, new glaciers, and snow-fields. They were now in the canton of Vallais, and had crossed the range which could be seen from Grindelwald, but were yet far from his new home. Other ravines, other pastures, woods, and mountain-paths now came into sight, other houses, and other people; but they were strange and deformed-looking beings, with pale faces, and huge wens hanging from their necks. They were *crétins*, feebly moving about, and looking listlessly at Rudy and his companions — the women were particularly repulsive to look at. Should he find such people in his new home?



THE MYSTERIOUS SHEPHERD AND HIS BLACK SHEEP.

III

UNCLE

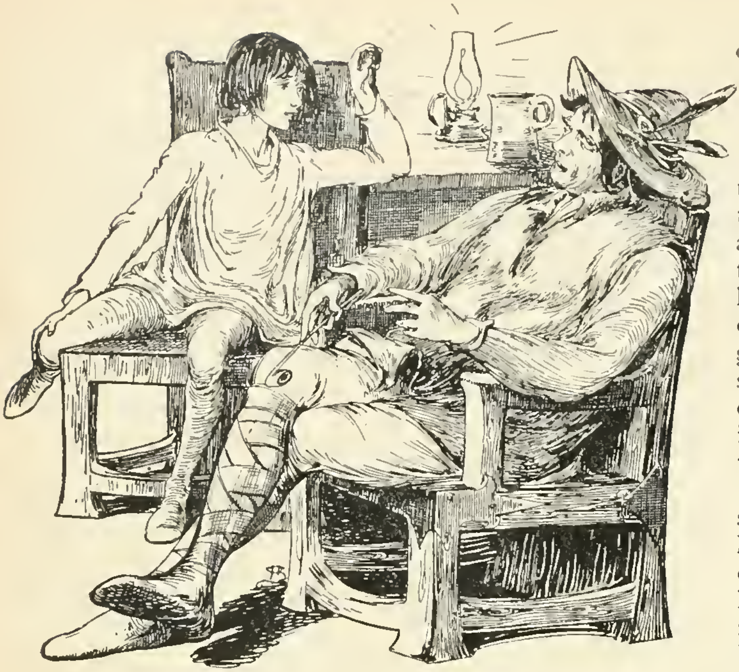
RUDY had now come to his uncle's house, and found to his relief that the people were like those he had been used to. There was only one *crétin*, a poor silly boy—one of those who rove from one house to another in the canton of Vallais, staying a month or two in each house, and the unfortunate Saperli was there when Rudy came.

Uncle was a great hunter, and also knew the cooper's trade. His wife was a lively little person, and almost looked like a bird; her eyes were like those of an eagle, and her long neck was quite downy.

Rudy found everything new to him—dress, habits and customs, and language, though he would soon get used to that. They seemed more comfortably off than in his grandfather's house. The rooms were large, and the walls were decorated with chamois' horns and polished guns, and there was a picture of the Virgin over the door; fresh Alpine roses and a burning lamp stood before it.

Uncle was, as I have said, one of the most successful chamois-hunters in the neighbourhood, and also one of the best guides. Rudy soon became the pet of the household. They had one pet already, an old hound, blind and deaf; he was no longer able to go out hunting, but they took care of him in return for his former services. Rudy patted the dog, and wished to make friends; but he did not care to make friends with strangers, though Rudy was not long a stranger there.

"We live very well here in the canton of Vallais," said uncle; "we have chamois, who are not so easily killed as the steinbock, but we get on better than in the old days. It is all very well to praise former times, but we are better off now. An opening has been made, and the air blows through our secluded vale. We always get something better when the old thing is done with," said he; for uncle had much to say, and would tell tales of his childhood, and of the days when his father was vigorous, when Vallais was, as he said, a closed bag, full of sick folk and unfortunate *crétins*; "but the French soldiers came, and they were the right sort of doctors, for they killed both the disease and the persons who had it. The French knew all about fighting; they struck their blows in many ways, and their maidens could strike too!" and here uncle nodded at his wife, who was a Frenchwoman. "The French struck at our stones in fine style! They struck the Simplon road through the rocks; they struck the road, so that I may say to a child of three years old, 'Go to Italy, keep right on the highway!' and the child will find himself in Italy if he only keeps right on the road!" and then uncle sang a French song, "Hurrah for Napoleon Buonaparte!"



HIS UNCLE WOULD TELL TALES OF HIS CHILDHOOD.

Rudy now heard for the first time of France, and of Lyons, a great town on the river Rhone, where his uncle had been.

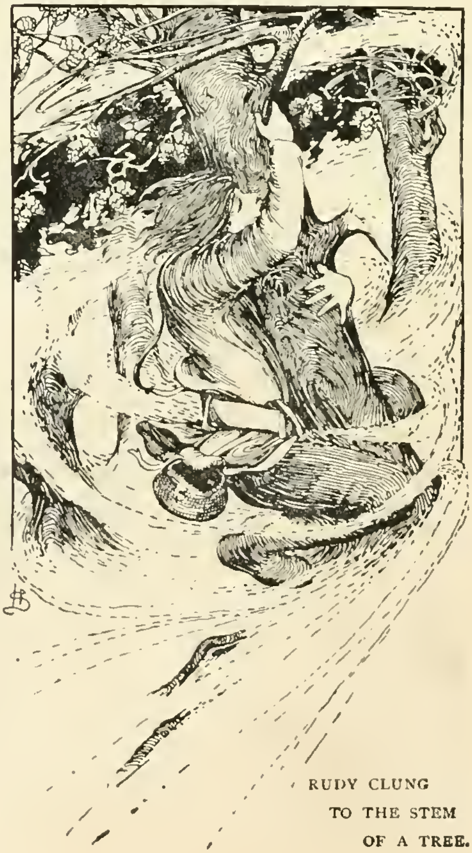
In a few years Rudy was to become an active chamois-hunter. His uncle said he was capable of it; he therefore taught him to handle a gun and to shoot. In the hunting season he took him to the mountains, and made him drink the warm blood from the chamois, which keeps a hunter from giddiness. He taught him to know the seasons when avalanches would roll down the mountain sides, at mid-day or in the afternoon, according to whether the sun had been strong on the places. He taught him to watch how the chamois sprang, and notice how his feet fell that he might stand firm; and that where he could obtain no foothold he must catch hold with his elbows, grasp with his muscles, and hold with his thighs and knees—that he might even hold with his neck if necessary. The chamois were very wary,—they would send one to look out; but the hunter must be still more wary,—put them off the scent. He had known them so stupid that if he hung his coat and hat on an alpenstock, the chamois took the coat for a man. Uncle played this trick one day when he and Rudy were out hunting.

The mountain paths were narrow; they were often a mere cornice or ledge projecting over a giddy precipice. The snow was half melted, and the rock crumbled beneath the feet; so the uncle laid himself down at full length and crept along. Each stone, as it broke off, fell, striking and rolling from ledge to ledge till it was out of sight. Rudy stood about a hundred paces from his uncle on a projecting rock, and from this point he saw a great bearded vulture swooping over his uncle, whom it seemed to be about to strike over the precipice with its wings, to make him its prey. Uncle had his eye on the chamois, which he could see with its kid on the other side of the ravine; Rudy kept his eye on the bird, knew what it would do, and had his hands on his gun ready to fire; the chamois suddenly sprang up, uncle fired, the animal fell dead, the kid made off as if it was used to dangers. At the sound of the gun the bird flew away, and uncle knew nothing of his danger until told of it by Rudy.

As they were going home in the best of humours, uncle whistling one of his songs, they suddenly heard a strange noise not far off; they looked round them, and saw that the snow on the side of the mountain was all in motion. It waved up and down, broke into pieces, and came down with a roar like thunder. It was an avalanche, not over Rudy and uncle, but near, too near, to them.

"Hold fast, Rudy!" he shouted; "fast, with all your power!"

And Rudy clung to the stem of a tree; uncle climbed



RUDY CLUNG TO THE STEM OF A TREE.

above him up to the branches and held fast, while the avalanche rolled past at a distance of a few yards; but the rush of air broke the trees and bushes all around like reeds, and cast the fragments down, and left Rudy pressed to the earth. The tree-stem to which he had held was broken, and the top flung to a distance; there, among the broken branches, lay uncle, his head crushed; his hand was still warm, but you would not know his face. Rudy stood pale and trembling; it was the first shock in his life, the first time he had felt horror.

It was late when he brought the tidings of death to what was now a sorrowful home. The wife was speechless and tearless until they brought the body home, then her grief broke forth. The unfortunate *crétin* hid himself in his bed, nor did they see him all the next day; but in the evening he came to Rudy.

"Write a letter for me! Saperli cannot write! Saperli can go with the letter to the post!"

"A letter from thee?" exclaimed Rudy. "And to whom?"

"To the Lord Christ!"

"What do you mean?"

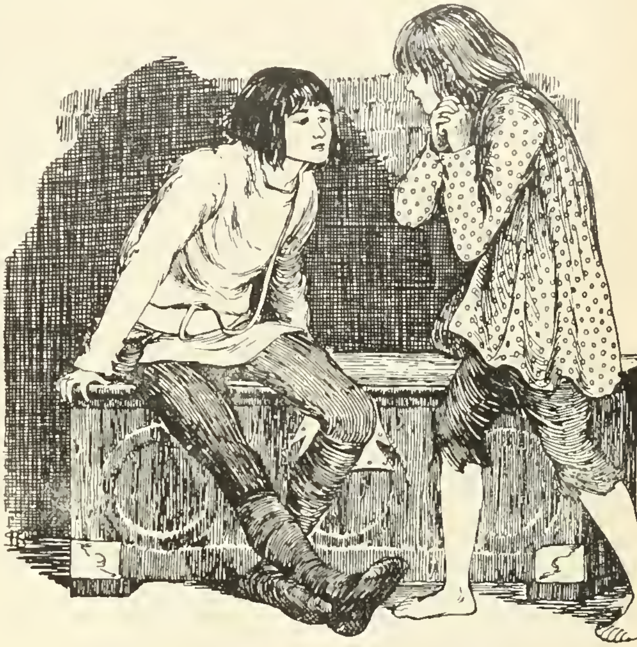
And the half-idiot, as they called the *crétin*, cast a pathetic glance at Rudy, folded his hands, and said solemnly and slowly:

"Jesus Christ! Saperli wishes to send a letter to ask Him that Saperli may lie dead, and not the man in this house."

And Rudy took him by the hand. "That letter would not go there! that letter would not bring him back."

But it was impossible for Rudy to make him understand.

"Now thou art the support of the house," said the widow, and Rudy became so



"WRITE A LETTER FOR ME TO THE LORD CHRIST."

IV

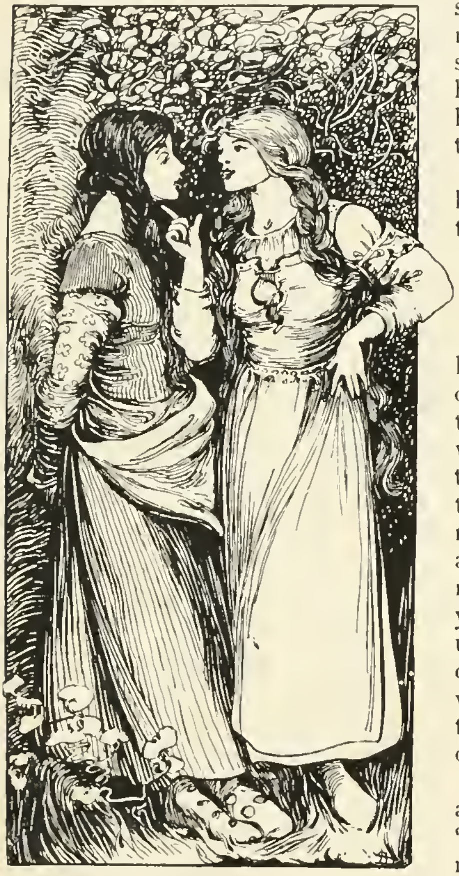
BABETTE

WHO is the best shot in the canton of Vallais? Even the chamois knew. "Take care of Rudy's shooting!" they said. "Who is the handsomest huntsman?" "Rudy is!" said the maidens, but they did not say, "Take care of Rudy's shooting!" nor did their serious mothers say so either; he nodded to them as lightly as he did to a young girl; for he was brave and joyous, his cheeks were brown, his teeth sound and white, and his eyes coal-black and sparkling; he was a handsome fellow, and not more than twenty. The ice-cold water did not hurt him in swimming; he swam like a fish, could climb better than any other man, could hold fast like a snail to the walls of rock, for his muscles and sinews were good; and you saw when he leapt that he had taken lessons from the cat and from the chamois. Rudy was the surest guide to depend on, and might have made his fortune in that way; his uncle had also taught him coopering, but he gave little thought to that, for his pleasure and delight was in shooting the chamois; and in this way he earned money. Rudy was a good match, as they say, if he did not look above his own position. And he was a dancer among dancers so that the maidens dreamt of him, and some of them even thought of him when waking.

"He gave me a kiss at the dance!" said Annette, the schoolmaster's daughter, to her dearest friend; but she ought not to have said that even to her dearest friend. Such a secret is not easy to keep: it is like sand in a bag full of holes, it will run out; and they all soon knew that Rudy had given her a kiss at the dance, though he had not kissed the one that he wanted to kiss.

"Just watch him!" said an old huntsman; "he has kissed Annette; he has begun with A, and he will kiss all through the alphabet."

A kiss at the dance was all that the gossips could say against Rudy so far; but although he had kissed Annette, she was not the flower of his heart.



"HE GAVE ME A KISS AT THE DANCE."

Down at Bex, among the great walnut-trees, close to a little rapid mountain stream, there lived a rich miller; his dwelling-house was a big building of three floors, with small turrets, roofed with shingle and ornamented with metal plates which shone in the rays of the sun or the moon; the biggest turret had for a weather-cock a glittering arrow which had transfixed an apple, in memory of Tell's marksmanship. The mill appeared fine and prosperous, and one could both sketch and describe it, but one could not sketch or describe the miller's daughter; at least, Rudy says one could not, and yet he had her image in his heart. Her eyes had so beamed upon him that they had quite kindled a flame; this had come quite suddenly, as other fires come, and the strangest thing was, that the miller's daughter, the charming Babette, had no thought of it, as she and Rudy had never spoken to each other.

The miller was rich, and his riches made Babette hard to approach; "But nothing is so high," said Rudy to himself, "that a man can't get up to it; a man must climb, and he need not fall, nor lose faith in himself." This lesson he had learnt at home.

It happened one day that Rudy had business at Bex, and it was quite a journey, for the railway did not then go there. From the Rhone glacier, at the foot of the Simplon, between many and various mountain-heights, stretches the broad valley of the Rhone, whose flood often overflows its banks, overwhelming everything. Between the towns of Sion and St. Maurice the valley bends in the shape of an elbow, and below St. Maurice it is so narrow that it hardly allows room for more than the river itself and a narrow road. An old tower stands here on the mountain side, as a sentry to mark the boundary of the canton of Vallais, opposite the stone bridge by the toll-house; and here begins the canton Vaud, not far from the town of Bex. As you advance you notice the increase of fertility, you seem to have come into a garden of chestnuts and walnut-trees; here and there are cypresses and pomegranates in flower; there is a southern warmth, as if you had come into Italy.

Rudy arrived at Bex, finished his business, and looked about him; but never a lad from the mill, not to mention Babette, could he see. This was not what he wished.

It was now towards evening; the air was full of the scent of the wild thyme and of the flowers of the limes; a shining veil seemed to hang over the wooded mountains, with a stillness, not of sleep, nor of death, but rather as if nature were holding its breath, in order to have its likeness photographed on the blue vault of heaven. Here and there between the trees, and across the green fields stood poles, to support the telegraph wires, already carried through that tranquil valley; by one of these leaned an object, so still that it might have been mistaken for a tree-stump, but it was Rudy, who was as still and quiet as everything about him; he was not asleep, and he certainly was not dead. But thoughts were rushing through his brain, thoughts mighty and overwhelming, which were to mould his future.

His eyes were directed to one point amidst the leaves, one light in the miller's parlour where Babette lived. So still was Rudy standing, that you might believe he was taking aim at a chamois, for the chamois will sometimes stand for an instant as if a part of the rock, and then suddenly, startled by the rolling of a stone, will spring away; and so it was with Rudy—a sudden thought startled him.

"Never give up!" he cried. "Call at the mill! Good evening to the miller, good day to Babette. A man doesn't fall when he doesn't think about it; Babette must see me at some time if I am ever to be her husband."

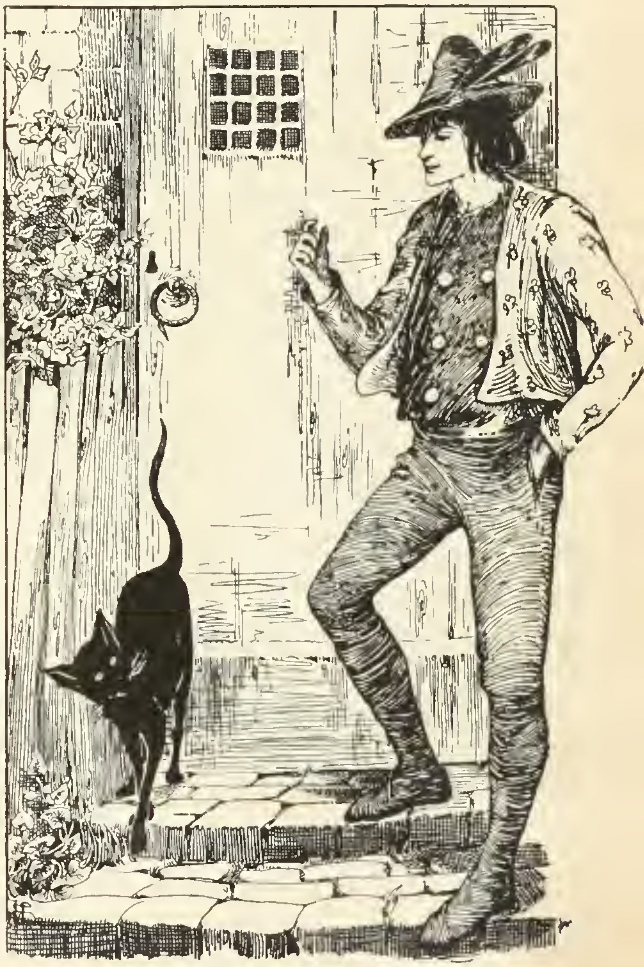
Rudy laughed, for he was of good cheer, and he went to the mill; he knew well enough what he wished for—he wished for Babette.

The river, with its yellowish water, rushed along, and the willows and limes overhung its banks; Rudy went up the path, and as it says in the old children's song:

> "to the miller's house,
> But found no one at home
> Except little Puss!"

The parlour cat stood on the steps, put up his back, and said "Miou!" but Rudy had no thought for that speech; he knocked at the door; no one heard, no one opened it. "Miou!" said the cat. If Rudy had been little, he would have understood animals' language, and known that the cat said: "There's no one at home!" So he went over to the mill to ask, and there he got the information. The master had gone on a journey, as far as the town of Interlaken, "*inter lacūs*, between the lakes," as the schoolmaster, Annette's father, had explained it in a lesson. The miller was far away, and Babette with him; there was a grand shooting competition—it began to-morrow, and went on for eight days. Switzers from all the German cantons would be there.

Unlucky Rudy, you might say, this was not a fortunate time to come to Bex; so he turned and marched above St. Maurice and Sion to his own valley and his own mountains; but he was not disheartened. The sun rose next morning, but his spirits were already high, for they had never set.



THE PARLOUR CAT STOOD ON THE STEPS.

"Babette is at Interlaken, many days' journey from hence," he said to himself. "It is a long way there if one goes by the high road, but it is not so far if you strike across the mountains, as I have often done in chamois-hunting. There is my old home, where I lived when little with my grandfather; and the shooting-match is at Interlaken! I will be the best of them; and I will be with Babette, when I have made acquaintance with her."

With his light knapsack, containing his Sunday suit and his gun and game-bag, Rudy went up the mountain by the short way, which was, however, pretty long; but the shooting-match only began that day and was to last over a week, and all that time, he was told, the miller and Babette would spend with their relations at Interlaken. So Rudy crossed the Gemmi, meaning to come down near Grindelwald.

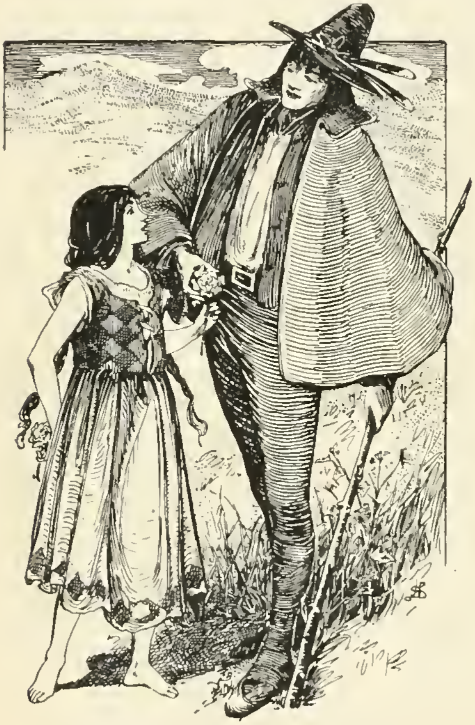
Healthy and joyful, he stepped along, up in the fresh, the light, the invigorating mountain air.

The valley sank deeper, the horizon opened wider; here was a snow-peak, and there another, and soon he could see the whole shining range of the Alps. Rudy knew every snow-mountain, and he made straight for the Schreckhorn, which raised its white-sprinkled, stony fingers high into the blue air.

At length he crossed the highest ridge. The pastures stretched down towards his own valley; the air was light, and he felt merry; mountain and valley smiled with abundance of flowers and verdure; his heart was full of thoughts of youth: one should never become old, one need never die; to live, to conquer, to be happy! free as a bird—and he felt like a bird. And the swallows flew by him, and sang, as they used to do in his childhood: "We and you, and you and we!" All was soaring and rejoicing.

Below lay the velvety green meadow, sprinkled with brown châlets, and the Lütschine humming and rushing. He saw the glacier, with its bottle-green edges covered with earth-soiled snow; he saw the deep fissures, and the upper and the lower glacier. The sound of the church bells came to him, as if they were ringing to welcome him home; his heart beat more strongly, and swelled so that Babette was forgotten for a moment, so large was his heart and so full of memories!

He again went along the way where he had stood as a little urchin with the other children, and sold the carved châlets. He saw among the pines his grandfather's house, but strangers now lived in it. Children came along the path to sell things, and one of them offered him an Alpine rose; Rudy took it as a good omen, and he thought of Babette. He soon crossed the bridge where the two Lütschine unite; the trees here grew thicker, and the walnuts gave a refreshing shade. He now saw the flag waving, the white cross on a red background, the flag of the Switzers and the Danes; and now he had reached Interlaken.



OFFERED HIM AN ALPINE ROSE.

This, Rudy thought, was certainly a splendid town. It was a Swiss town in Sunday dress; not like other places, crowded with heavy stone houses, ponderous, strange, and stately. No! here it seemed as if the châlets had come down from the mountains into the green valley, close by the clear, rapid stream, and had arranged themselves in a row, a little in and out, to make a street. And the prettiest of all the streets—yes, that it certainly was!—had sprung up since Rudy was here, when he was little. It seemed to have been built of all the charming châlets which his grandfather had carved and stored in the cabinet at home, and they had grown up here by some power like the old, oldest chestnut-trees. Each house was a hotel, with carved woodwork on the windows and doors, and a projecting roof, and was elegantly built; and in front of the house was a flower-garden, between it and the broad, macadamized road; all the houses stood on one side of the road, so as not to hide the fresh green meadows, where the cows wandered about with bells like those in the high Alpine pastures. It seemed to be in the midst of lofty mountains, which had drawn apart in one direction to allow the snow-clad peak of the Jungfrau to be seen, most lovely of all the Swiss mountains.

There were a great many well-dressed visitors from foreign countries as well as many Switzers from the different cantons. Each competitor had his number in a garland on his hat. Singing and playing on all kinds of instruments were to be heard everywhere, mingled with cries and shouts. Mottoes were put up on the houses and bridges, flags and pennons floated in the breeze; the crack of the rifles was frequently heard, and Rudy thought this the sweetest sound of all; indeed, in the excitement of the moment he quite forgot Babette, although he had come on purpose to meet her.

The marksmen now went in the direction of the target. Rudy went with them, and was the best shot of them all—he hit the bull's-eye every time.

"Who is that young stranger who shoots so well?" the onlookers asked each other. "He talks French as they do in canton Vallais. But he also speaks German very well," others replied.

"They say he was brought up near Grindelwald," one of the competitors remarked.

There was life in the fellow, his eyes shone, his arm was steady, and for that reason he never failed in hitting the mark. Courage comes with success, but Rudy had a store of natural courage. Admiring friends soon gathered around him, and complimented him on his success; he altogether forgot Babette. Then some one laid his hand on his shoulder, and spoke to him in French.

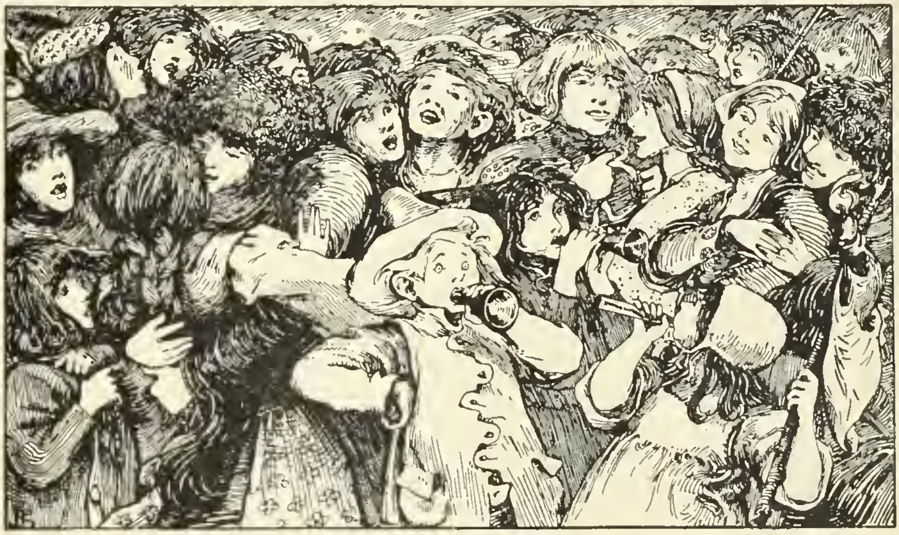
"You belong to the canton of Vallais?"

Rudy turned, and saw a burly individual with a rosy, good-humoured face. It was the wealthy miller from Bex; his stout form almost concealed the pretty, slim Babette, but she looked at Rudy with her sparkling, dark eyes. The miller was glad that a rifleman from his own canton should prove the best shot, and should have won universal applause. Rudy was certainly in luck, for although he had forgotten his principal object in coming, she had now come forward to him.

When neighbours meet one another at a distance from home they generally get talking, and make each other's acquaintance. Because Rudy was a good shot he had become a leader at the rifle competition, just as much as the miller was at Bex, because of his wealth and his good business; so they clasped each other by the hand for the first time; Babette also offered her hand to Rudy who squeezed it, and looked at her so earnestly that she quite blushed.

The miller spoke of their long journey, and how many large towns they had come through; and it certainly seemed to have been a very long journey, as they had travelled by the steamboat, and also by rail and by post-chaise.

"I came the nearest way," said Rudy. "I walked over the mountains; no road is too high for a man to come over it."



SINGING AND PLAYING ON ALL KINDS OF INSTRUMENTS.

"And break your neck," said the miller. "You look just the man to break his neck one day, you look so headstrong."

"A man doesn't fall if he doesn't think about it," replied Rudy.

The miller's relatives in Interlaken, with whom he and Babette were staying, asked Rudy to visit them, as he was from the same canton. This was a chance for Rudy; fortune favoured him, as she always does favour those who endeavour to succeed by their own energy, and remember that "Providence gives us nuts, but we have to crack them for ourselves."

Rudy was welcomed by the miller's relatives as if he had belonged to the family, and they drank to the health of the best shot, and Babette clinked her glass with the others, and Rudy thanked them for the toast.

In the evening they went for a stroll on the road by the big hotels beneath the old walnut-trees, and there was such a throng, and the people pushed so that Rudy was able to offer his arm to Babette. He said he was glad to have met the people from Vaud. The cantons of Vaud and Vallais were very good neighbours. He seemed so thoroughly pleased that Babette could not resist the inclination to press his hand. They walked together just like old acquaintances, and she was very amusing. Rudy was delighted with her naïve remarks on the peculiarities in the dress and behaviour of the foreign ladies; and yet she did not wish to make fun of them, for she knew that many of them were amiable and worthy people—indeed, her own godmother was an English lady. She had been living in Bex eighteen years ago, when Babette was christened, and she had given her the valuable brooch she was now wearing. Her godmother had twice written to her, and Babette was now hoping to see her and her daughters in Interlaken. "They were two old maids, almost thirty!" said Babette; but you must remember that she was only eighteen.

Her little tongue was never still for an instant, and all that Babette had to say was intensely interesting to Rudy; and he told her all about himself—that he had frequently been to Bex, and knew the mill well, and that he had often seen her, though he did not suppose she had ever noticed him; and how he had called at the mill, hoping to see her, and found that her father and she were away from home, a long way from home, indeed, but not so far that he could not get over the barrier which divided them.

He told her a great deal more than this. He told her that he was very fond of her, and that he had come here on purpose to see her, and not for the rifle competition.

Babette was very quiet when he told her this; she thought he set too high a value on her.

While they continued rambling, the sun set behind the mighty wall of rock; the Jungfrau stood out in all its beauty and magnificence, with the green of the tree-clad slopes on either side of it. All stood still to admire the gorgeous spectacle, and both Rudy and Babette were happy in watching it.

"There is no place more lovely than this!" said Babette.

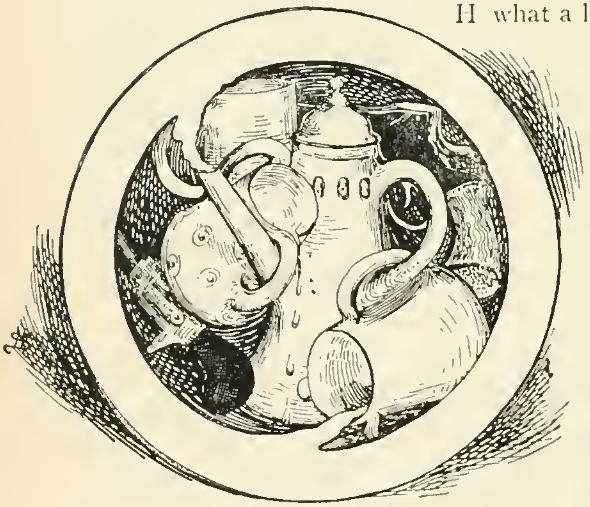
"No, indeed!" exclaimed Rudy, and then he looked at Babette.

"I must go home to-morrow," he said, after a short silence.

"You must come to see us at Bex," Babette whispered to him; "my father will be pleased."

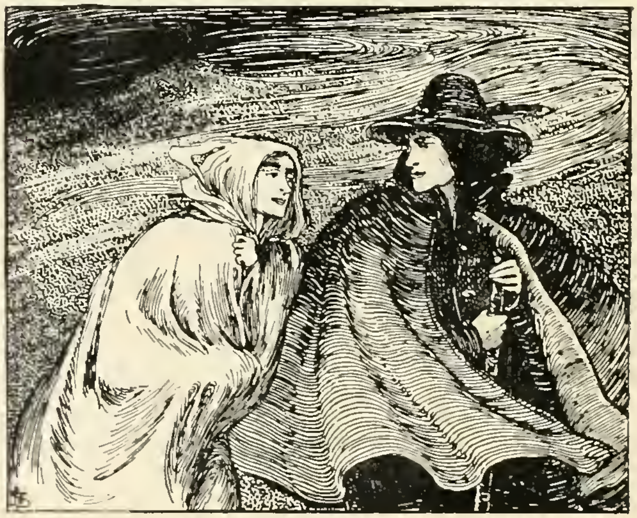
V

THE RETURN HOME



OH what a load Rudy had to carry home with him over the mountains the next day! He had won three silver cups, two rifles, and a silver coffee-pot; this would be of use to him when he began housekeeping. But that was not the heaviest thing; there was something heavier and stronger which he carried with him—or which carried him—on that return journey over the mountains. The weather was wild, dull, heavy, and wet; dense clouds covered the mountain tops like a thick veil, quite hiding the snowy peaks. From the valleys he heard the sound of the woodman's axe, and huge trunks of trees rolled down the steep mountain sides; they seemed only like small sticks, but they were big enough for masts. The Lütschine rushed along with its continual hum, the wind shrieked, and the clouds hurried across the sky. Then Rudy discovered that a young maid was walking at his side; he had not seen her until she was quite near. She also was about to climb over the mountain. The girl's eyes had a strange power; you could not help looking at them, and they were wonderful eyes, very clear, and deep—oh, so deep!

"Have you a sweetheart?" said Rudy, for that was all he could think of.



"HAVE YOU A SWEETHEART?" SAID RUDY.

"No, I have not," laughingly replied the maiden; but she did not look as if she spoke the truth. "Don't go round all that way," she then said. "You must bear more to the left; that is the shortest way."

"Yes, and tumble down a crevasse!" said Rudy. "You're a fine one to be a guide if you don't know better than that!"

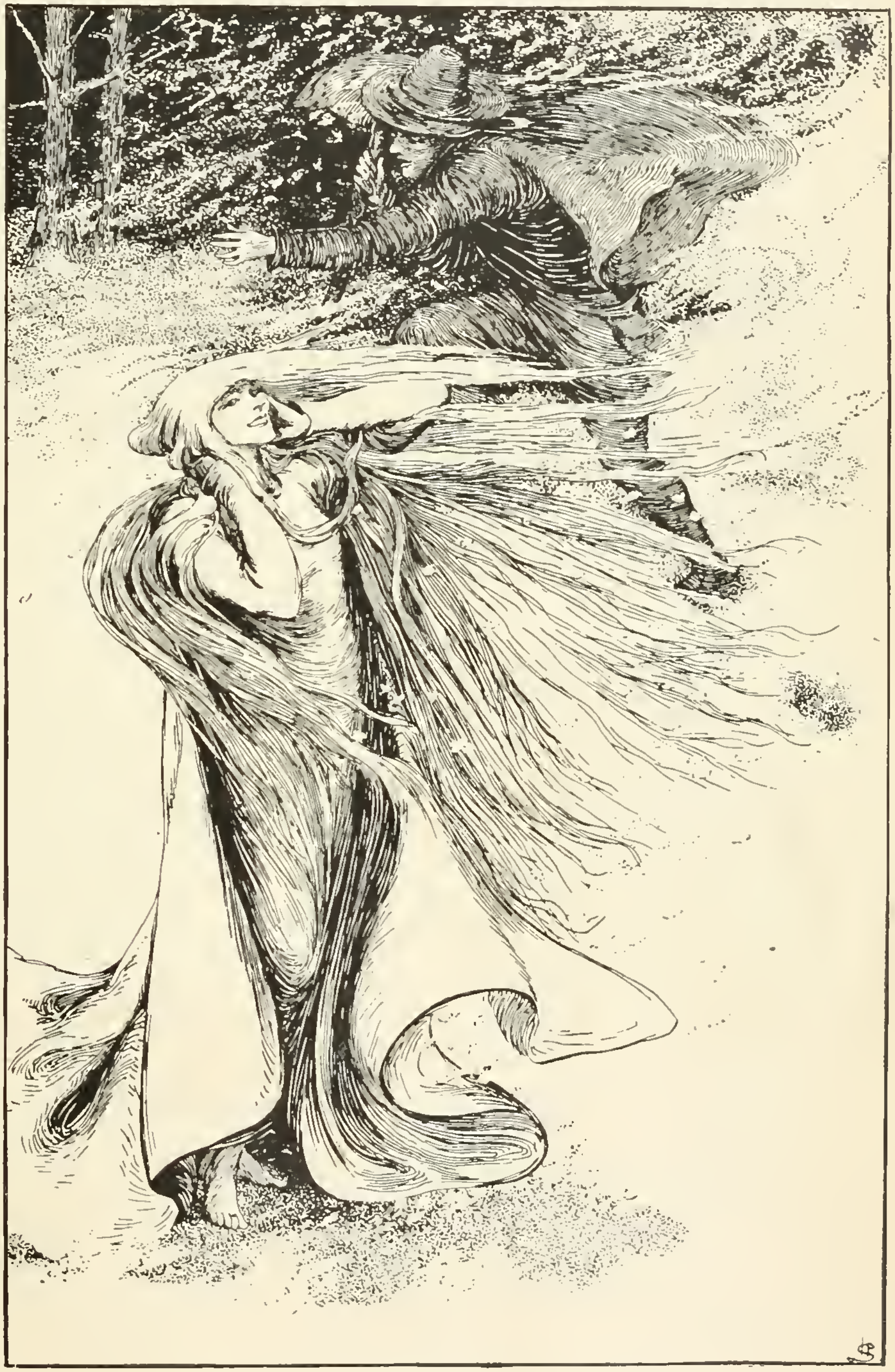
"I know the way," she replied, "and my thoughts have not gone astray. Yours are below, in the valley, but here, on high, you should be thinking of the Ice-Maiden; people say that she does not love men."

"I fear her not!" exclaimed Rudy. "She had to yield me up when I was a baby, and I am not going to yield myself up to her now that I am a man."

It grew darker, and the rain poured down; then came the snow, dazzling and bewildering.

"Take my hand," said the maiden, "I will help you;" and she touched him with her ice-cold fingers.

"You needn't help me!" returned Rudy; "I don't need a girl to teach me to climb!" and he hurried on, leaving her behind. The snow came down all around him, the wind shrieked, and he heard strange sounds of laughing and singing behind him. He believed she was one of the spirits in the Ice-Maiden's train, of whom he had heard tales when he spent the night up in the mountains as a boy.



THE SNOW CAME DOWN AND THE WIND SHRIEKED.

The snow ceased to fall, and he was now above the clouds. He looked behind him, but saw nobody; yet he heard a strange singing and yodeling that he did not like, as it did not sound human.

When Rudy was quite at the highest ridge, from which the way tended downwards towards the Rhone valley, he saw above Chamonix, in a patch of blue sky, two bright stars shining and twinkling; they reminded him of Babette, and of his own good fortune, and the thought made him feel quite warm.

VI

A VISIT TO THE MILL

"WHAT splendid things you have brought back with you!" cried his old foster-mother; and her eagle eyes sparkled, and her lean neck waved backwards and forwards more than ever. "You are lucky, Rudy! Let me kiss you, my dear boy!"

And Rudy submitted to be kissed; but he looked as if he regarded it as a thing which had to be put up with. "What a handsome fellow you are getting, Rudy!" said the old woman.

"Don't talk such nonsense," Rudy replied, laughing; but nevertheless he liked to hear it.

"I say it again," said the old woman. "You are very lucky!"

"Perhaps you may be right," he rejoined, for he was thinking of Babette.

He had never before been so anxious to go down the valley.

"They must have gone home," he said to himself. "They were to have been back two days ago. I must go to Bex."

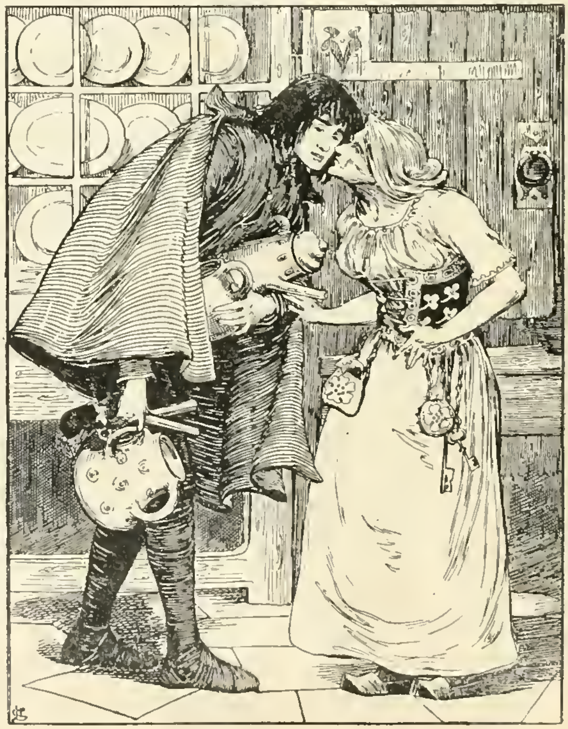
So Rudy went to Bex, and found his friends at home at the mill. They received him kindly, and had brought a message for him from the family at Interlaken. Babette did not speak much; she was very quiet, but her eyes spoke volumes, and that satisfied Rudy. Even the miller, who had always led the conversation, and who had always had his remarks and jokes laughed at on account of his wealth, seemed to delight in hearing of all Rudy's adventures in his hunting; and Rudy described the difficulties and perils which the chamois-hunters have to face among the mountains—how they must cling to, or creep over, the narrow ledges of snow which are frozen on to the mountain sides, and make their way over the snow bridges which span deep chasms in the rocks. And Rudy's eyes sparkled as he was relating these hunting adventures, the intelligence and activity of the chamois, and the dangers of the tempest and the avalanche. He perceived as he went on that the miller grew increasingly interested in his wild life, and that the old man paid especial attention to his account of the bearded vulture and the royal eagle.

Among other things, he happened to mention that, at no great distance, in the canton of Vallais, an eagle had built its nest most ingeniously under a steep projecting rock, and that the nest contained a young one which nobody could capture. Rudy said that an Englishman had offered him a handful of gold the other day if he could take him the eaglet alive; "but there is a limit to everything," said he. "That eaglet cannot be taken; it would be foolhardy to try."

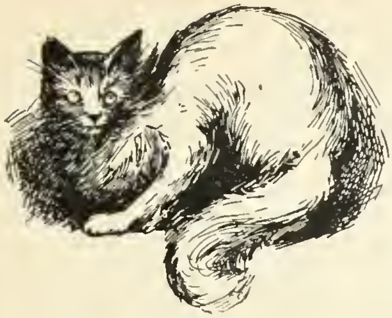
But the wine assisted the flow of conversation; and Rudy thought the evening all too short, though he did not start on his return journey until past midnight, the first time he visited the mill.

Lights were still to be seen at the windows of the mill; and the parlour cat came out at an opening in the roof, and met the kitchen cat on the gutter.

"Have you heard the news at the mill?" said



RUDY SUBMITTED TO BE KISSED.



THEY TROD ON ME MORE THAN ONCE.

the parlour cat. "There's love-making going on in the house! The father doesn't know of it. Rudy and Babette have been treading on each other's paws all the evening under the table. They trod on me more than once, but I kept quiet, lest it should be noticed."

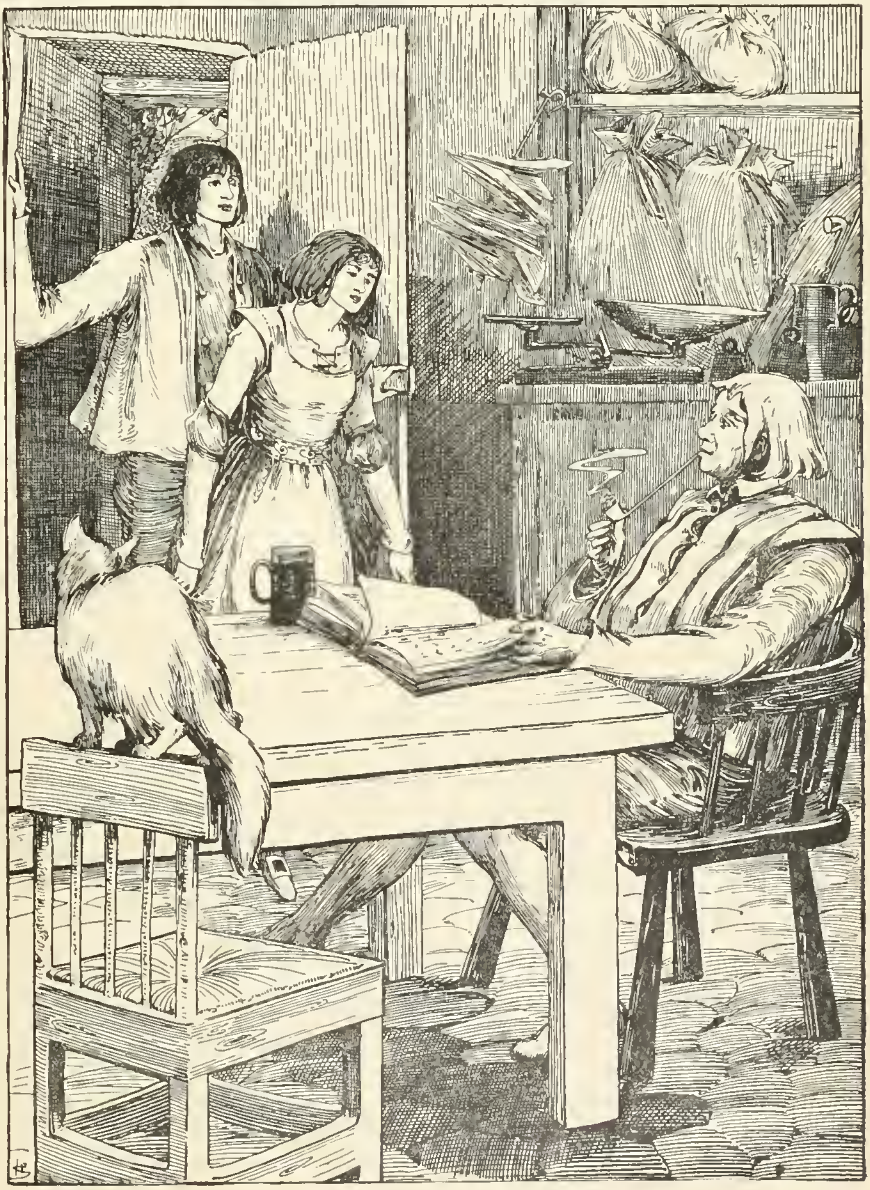
"I would have mewed," replied the kitchen cat.

"Kitchen behaviour will not suit the parlour," said the parlour cat; "but I should like to know what the miller will say when he hears of the love-making."

What will the miller say, indeed? Rudy, also, wanted to know that; and he would not wait very long without finding it out. So a few days later, when the omnibus rolled over the Rhone bridge between Vallais and Vaud, Rudy was in it, in his usual high spirits, happy in the expectation of a favourable answer to the question he intended to ask that same evening.

In the evening, when the omnibus was returning, Rudy was again inside; but the parlour cat had great news to tell.

"Do you know it, you from the kitchen? The miller knows everything. That was a fine end to the expedition! Rudy came here towards the evening, and he and Babette had much to whisper about; they stood in the passage which leads to the miller's room. I lay at their feet, but they had neither eyes nor thoughts for me. 'I am going straight in to your father!' said Rudy; 'that is the fair thing.' 'Shall I accompany you?' said Babette; 'it will encourage you.' 'I have sufficient courage!' said Rudy, 'but if you go too, he must look kindly on us, whether he will or no!' And they both went in. Rudy trod violently on my tail. Rudy is very clumsy! I mewed, but neither he nor Babette had ears to hear me. They opened the door, and they both went in, I in front; but I sprang up on the back of a chair, for I could not tell how Rudy would



THEY OPENED THE DOOR AND BOTH WENT IN.

kick. But the miller kicked! and it was a good kick! out of the door, and into the mountains to the chamois! Rudy may aim at them, and not at our little Babette."

"But what did they talk about?" asked the kitchen cat.

"Talk?—— They talked of everything that people say when they go a-wooing: 'I am fond of her, and she is fond of me! and when there is milk in the pail for one, there is also milk in the pail for two!' 'But she sits too high for you!' said the miller; 'she sits on grits, on golden grits; you can't reach her!' 'Nothing sits so high that a man can't reach it, if he will!' said Rudy; for he was very pert. 'But you can't reach the eaglet—you said so yourself! Babette sits higher!' 'I will take them both!' said Rudy. 'Yes, I will give her to you, when you give me the eaglet alive!' said the miller, and laughed till the tears stood in his eyes; 'but now I thank you for your visits, Rudy; come again in the morning, and you will find no one at home! Farewell, Rudy!' And Babette also said farewell, as miserable as a little kitten that can't see its mother. 'An honest man's word is as good as his bond!' said Rudy. 'Don't cry, Babette; I shall bring the eaglet!' 'You will break your neck, I hope!' said the miller, 'and so put an end to your race!' I call *that* a kick! Now Rudy is off, and Babette sits and cries, but the miller sings German songs that he has learnt on his journey! I won't grieve over that now; it can't be helped!"

"But yet there is still some hope for him!" said the kitchen cat.

VII

THE EAGLE'S NEST

FROM the mountain path sounds the yodeling, merry and strong, telling of good spirits and dauntless courage; it is Rudy—he is going to see his friend Vesinaud.

"You will help me! we will take Ragli with us. I must capture the eaglet up the face of the mountain!"

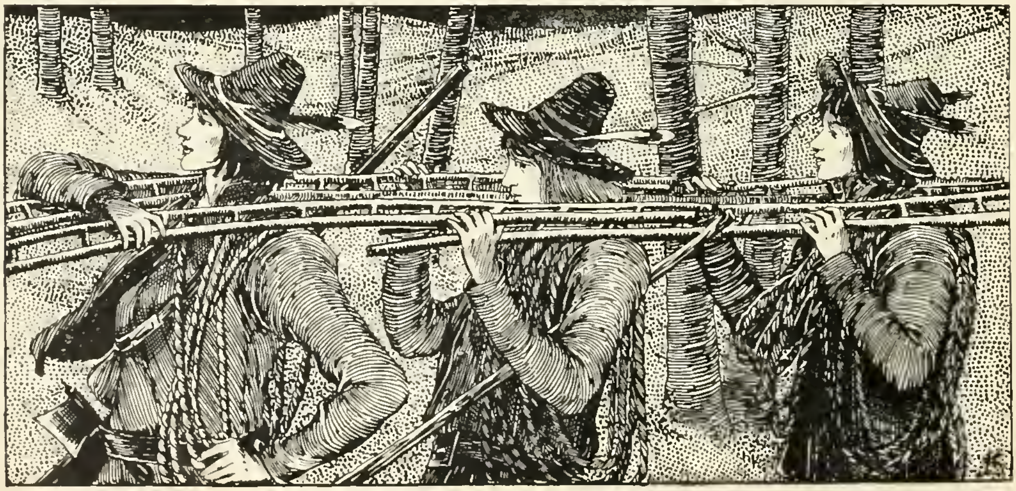
"Won't you take the spots of the moon first; that is as easy!" said Vesinaud. "You are in good spirits!"

"Yes, for I am thinking of getting married! But now, to be in earnest, I will tell you what I am intending!"

And soon Vesinaud and Ragli knew what Rudy wished.

"You are a daring lad!" said they. "You will not get there! You will break your neck!"

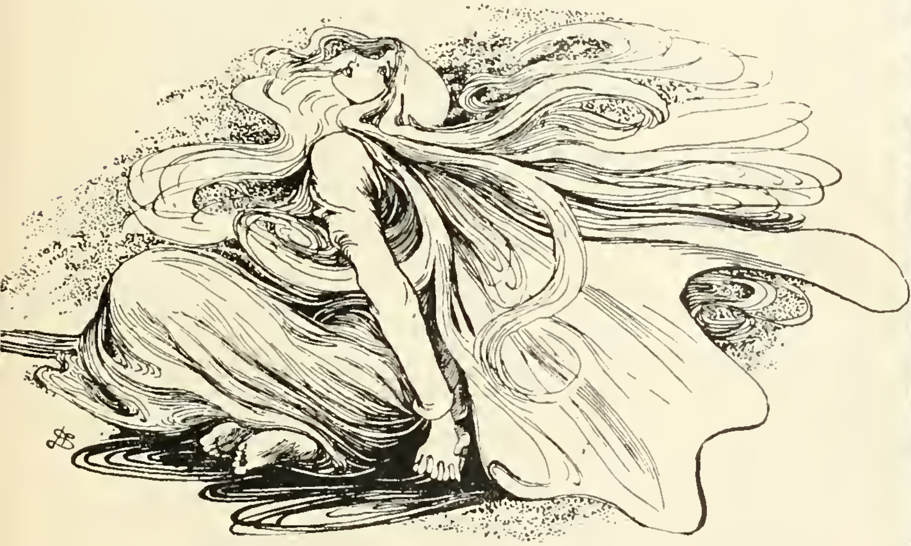
"A man does not fall down, when he does not think of it!" said Rudy.



THEY SET OFF WITH POLES, LADDERS, AND ROPES.

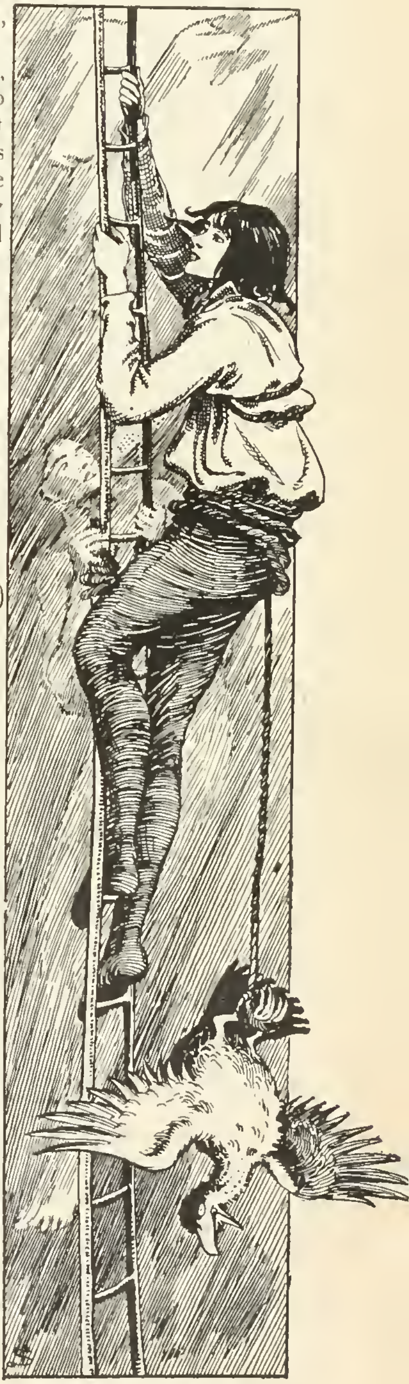
At midnight they set off with poles, ladders, and ropes; the way was through thickets and bushes, and over rolling stones, always up, up in the gloomy night. The water rushed below, the water murmured above, heavy clouds drove through the air. When the hunters reached the precipitous face of the mountain it was still darker, the rocky walls were almost met, and the sky could only be seen high up in a small cleft. Close by, under them, was the deep abyss with its rushing waters. All three sat quite still, waiting for daybreak, when the eagle would fly out; for they must first shoot it before they could think of taking the young one. Rudy sat down, as still as if he were a piece of the stone he sat on. He had his gun in his hand ready to shoot; his eyes were fixed on the topmost cleft, where, under a projecting ledge, the eagle's nest was concealed.

After waiting long, the hunters heard high above them a cracking, rushing sound; and suddenly they saw a great, hovering object. Two gun-barrels were pointed as the great black figure of the eagle flew out of its nest. One shot was heard; for a moment the bird moved its outstretched wings, and then slowly fell, as if with its greatness and the extension of its wings it would fill the whole of the chasm, and carry the hunters with it in its fall. The eagle sank into the depths; and brushing against the branches of trees and bushes, broke them as it fell


IN THE BLACK GAPING DEPTH SAT THE ICE-MAIDEN.

And now the hunters began work. They tied three of the longest ladders together, setting them up from the last secure foothold at the side of the precipice. But the ladders did not quite reach; the nest was higher up, hidden safe below the projecting rock, where it was as smooth as a wall. After some deliberation they decided to tie two ladders together, and lower them into the cleft from above, and join them to the three which had been set up from below. With great trouble they drew up the two ladders and secured the rope; they were then suspended over the projecting rock, and hung swinging over the abyss, and Rudy took his place on the lowest rung. It was an ice-cold morning, and vapours rose from the black chasm. Rudy sat out there as a fly sits on a waving straw which some bird has taken to the top of some high factory-chimney; but the fly can fly away if the straw gets loose, while Rudy can only break his neck. The wind whispered about him, and below, in the abyss, rushed the hurrying water from the melting glacier, the Ice-Maiden's palace.

When Rudy began to climb, the ladders trembled and swung like a spider's web; but when he reached the fourth ladder he found it


IT WAS CAPTURED ALIVE

secure, for the lashing had been well done. The topmost ladder was flattened against the rock, yet it swung ominously with Rudy's weight. And now came the most dangerous part of the climb. But Rudy knew this, for the cat had taught him; he did not think about Giddiness, which hovered in the air behind him, and stretched its octopus-like arms towards him. Now he stood on the highest rung of the ladder, and found that after all it did not reach high enough for him to see into the nest; he could only reach up to it with his hands. He tested the firmness of the thick plaited boughs that supported the lower part of the nest, and when he found a thick and firm bough, he pulled himself up by it till he got his head and chest over the nest. But there poured upon him an overpowering smell of carrion; putrefying lambs, chamois, and birds lay here torn to pieces. Giddiness, which was not able to reach him, puffed the poisonous exhalation into his face, to confuse him, and below, in the black gaping depth, over the hurrying water, sat the Ice-Maiden herself, with her long greenish hair, staring with deathly eyes like two gun-barrels, and saying to herself, "Now I shall capture you!"

In a corner of the nest he saw a large and powerful eaglet, which could not yet fly. Rudy fastened his eyes on it, held himself with all the force of one hand, and cast, with the other hand, a noose over the young bird. Thus, with its legs entangled in the line, it was captured alive. Rudy threw the noose with the bird in it over his shoulder, so that it hung a good way below him, and by the help of a rope he made himself fast till his toes reached the highest rung of the ladder.

"Hold fast! don't believe you will fall, and you won't fall!" this was his old lesson, and he stuck to it; he held fast, he scrambled, he was certain he should not fall, and he did not fall.

And now was heard a yodel, so vigorous and joyful. Rudy stood on the firm rock with his eaglet.

VIII

"HERE is what you demanded!" said Rudy, entering the miller's house at Bex; and, setting on the floor a large basket, he took off the cloth, and there glared from it two yellow, black-rimmed eyes, so sparkling, so wild, that they seemed to burn and devour everything they saw; the short, strong beak gaped, ready to bite, the neck was red and downy.

"The eaglet!" shouted the miller. Babette gave one scream, and sprang aside, but she could not turn her eyes away from Rudy or the eaglet.

"You are not to be frightened!" said the miller.

"And you always keep your word!" said Rudy; "each has his own characteristic!"

"But how is it you did not break your neck?" inquired the miller.

"Because I held fast!" answered Rudy, "and that I do still! I hold fast to Babette!"

"First see that you have her!" said the miller with a laugh; and that was a good sign, Babette knew.

"Let us get the eaglet out of the basket; it looks dangerous. How it stares! How did you catch it?"

And Rudy had to tell them, and the miller stared, opening his eyes wider and wider.

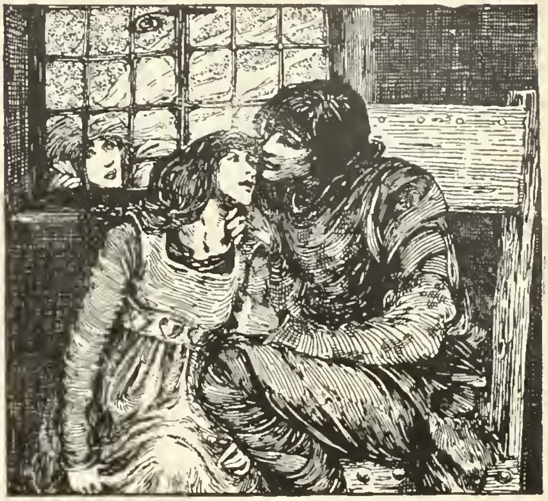
"With your boldness and luck you can maintain three wives!" said the miller.

"Thank you! thank you!" cried Rudy.

"Yes; still you have not got Babette!" said the miller, and jestingly slapped the young hunter on the shoulder.

"Have you heard the news in the mill?" said the parlour cat to the kitchen cat. "Rudy has brought us the eaglet, and will take Babette in exchange. They have kissed each other and let father see it! That is as good as an engagement. The old man didn't kick; he drew in his claws, and took his nap after dinner, and let the two sit and wag their tails. They have so much to say, they won't be finished before Christmas."

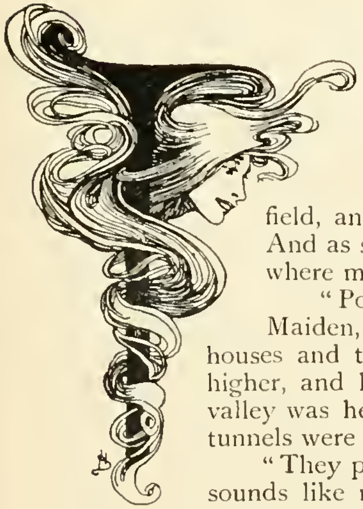
Nor had they finished before Christmas. The wind scattered the brown leaves, the snow drifted in the valley and on the high mountains. The Ice-Maiden sat in her noble palace, which grows in the winter; the rocky walls were coated with ice, there were icicles ponderous as elephants where in the summer the mountain-torrent poured its watery deluge; ice-garlands of fantastic ice-crystals glittered on the snow-powdered fir trees. The Ice-Maiden rode on the whistling wind across the deepest valleys. The snow carpet was spread quite down to Bex, and she could come there and see Rudy within doors, more than he was accustomed to, for he sat with Babette. The marriage was to take place towards the summer; he often had a ringing in his ears, so frequently did his friends talk of it. There was summer, glowing with the most beautiful alpine roses, the merry, laughing Babette, beautiful as spring, the spring that makes all the birds sing of summer and of weddings.


RUDY AND BABETTE.

"How can those two sit and hang over each other?" said the parlour cat. "I am now quite tired of their mewing!"

IX

THE ICE-MAIDEN



THE walnuts and chestnut-trees, all hung with the green garlands of spring, spread from the bridge at St. Maurice to the margin of the Lake of Geneva along the Rhone, which with violent speed rushes from its source under the green glacier—the ice palace, where the Ice-Maiden lives, whence she flies on the wind to the highest snow-field, and there, in the strong sunlight, stretches herself on her drifting bed. And as she sits there she looks with far-seeing glance into the deepest valleys, where men, like ants on a sunlit stone, busily move about.

"Powerful Spirits, as the Children of the Sun call you!" said the Ice-Maiden, "you are creeping things! with a rolling snow-ball both you and your houses and towns are crushed and effaced!" And she raised her proud head higher, and looked about her and deep down with deathly eyes. But from the valley was heard a rumbling, blasting of the rocks; men were at work; roads and tunnels were being made for railways.

"They play like moles!" said she; "they are digging passages, therefore I hear sounds like musket-shots. When I move my castle the sound is louder than the rolling of thunder."

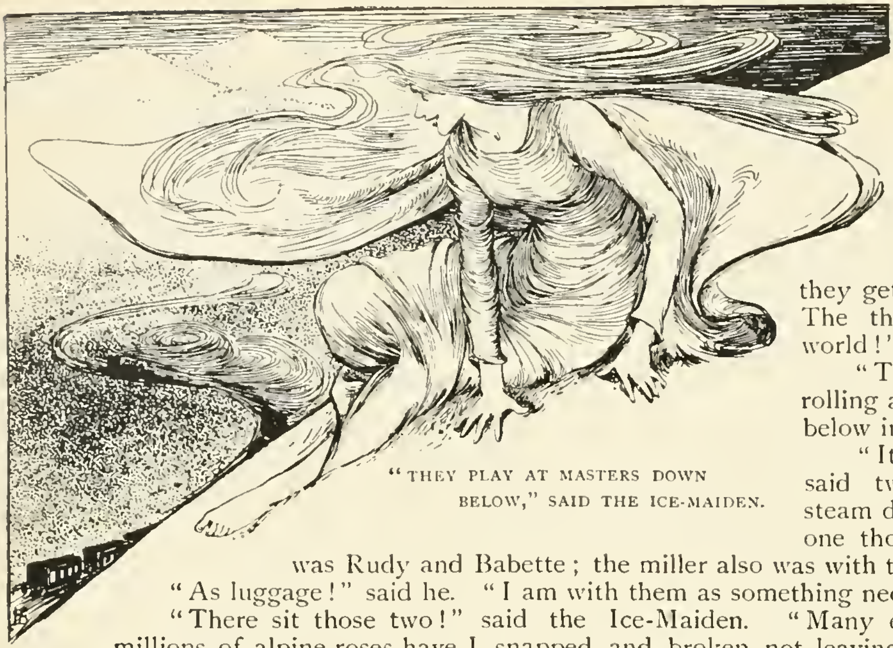
From the valley arose a smoke, which moved onward like a flickering veil; it was the flying plume from a locomotive, which was drawing a train on the recently opened railway, the winding serpent, whose joints are the carriages.

"They play at masters down below, the Powerful Spirits!" said the Ice-Maiden. "Yet the powers of nature are mightier!" and she laughed and sang, and the valleys resounded.

"Now there is an avalanche rolling!" said the men below.

But the Children of the Sun sang yet higher of human ideas, the powerful means which subdue the sea, remove mountains, fill up valleys; human ideas, they are the lords of the powers of nature. At the same moment there came over the snow-field, where the Ice-Maiden sat, a party of mountain climbers; they had bound themselves to one another with cords for greater security on the smooth plain of ice, near the deep precipices.

"Creeping things!" said she. "You the lords of nature!" and she turned herself away from them and looked mockingly down into the deep valley, where the railway train was rushing past.



“THEY PLAY AT MASTERS DOWN BELOW,” SAID THE ICE-MAIDEN.

“There they sit, these *thinkers*! they sit in their power! I see them all! One sits proud as a king, alone! there they sit in a cluster! there half of them are asleep! and when the steam dragon stops they get out, and go their way. The thinkers go out into the world!” And she laughed.

“There is an avalanche rolling again!” said those down below in the valley.

“It will not reach us!” said two people behind the steam dragon; “two souls with one thought,” as they say. It was Rudy and Babette; the miller also was with them.

“As luggage!” said he. “I am with them as something necessary!”

“There sit those two!” said the Ice-Maiden. “Many chamois have I crushed, millions of alpine roses have I snapped and broken, not leaving the roots! I will blot them out! Thinkers! Powerful Spirits!” And she laughed.

“There's an avalanche rolling again!” said those down below in the valley.

X

THE GODMOTHER

AT Montreux, one of the nearest towns which, with Clarens, Vernex, and Glion, form a garland at the north-eastern end of the Lake of Geneva, lived Babette's godmother, an English lady of position, with her daughters and a young relative; they had recently arrived, but the miller had already paid them a visit, told them of Babette's engagement, and of Rudy and the eaglet, and of his visit to Interlaken—in short, the whole history—and they had been highly delighted and pleased with Rudy and Babette, and with the miller; and at last made them all three come, and so they came—Babette must see her godmother, the godmother see Babette.

Near the little town of Villeneuve, at the end of the Lake of Geneva, lay the steamboat which in its half-hour's journey to Vernex lies under Montreux. This is a shore which poets have praised; here, under the walnut-trees, on the deep blue-green lake, sat Byron, and wrote his melodious lines on the prisoner in the Castle of Chillon. Yonder, where Clarens is reflected with its weeping willows in the lake, wandered Rousseau, dreaming of Heloïse. The river Rhone glides forth under the high, snow-capped mountains of Savoy; here lies, not far from its outlet in the lake, a little island—indeed, it is so small that from the shore it seems to be a boat out there; it is a rock which, more than a hundred years ago, a lady had surrounded with a stone wall, covered with soil, and planted with three acacia-trees, which now overshadow the whole island. Babette was quite enraptured with the little spot—it was to her the most charming in the whole voyage; she thought they ought to stay there, for it was a most delightful place. But the steamboat passed by it, and stopped, as it always did, at Vernex.

The little company wandered hence between the white, sunlit walls which enclosed the vineyards about the little mountain town of Montreux, where fig-trees cast a shade in front of the peasants' cottages, and laurels and cypresses grow in the gardens. Half-way up stood the boarding-house where the godmother was living.

They were very cordially received. The godmother was a tall, kind lady with a round, smiling face ; as a child she must have been like one of Raphael's angel heads, but now she was an old angel head, as her silvery hair was quite curly. The daughters were handsome, delicate-looking, tall, and slim. The young cousin, who was with them, was entirely dressed in white from top to toe, with yellow hair and whiskers, of which he had so much that it might have been divided between three gentlemen, and he at once paid great attention to little Babette.

Handsomely bound books, pieces of music, and drawings were spread over the large table, the balcony doors stood open overlooking the beautiful, extensive lake, which was so bright and still that the mountains of Savoy, with the country towns, woods, and snowy tops, were all reflected in it.

Rudy, who was always bold, lively, and confident, felt himself out of his element, as they say ; and he moved about as if he were walking on peas on a smooth floor. How slowly the hours passed ! as if on the treadmill. And now they went for a walk, and it was just as tedious ; Rudy might have taken two steps forward and then one back, and still kept pace with the others. They walked down to Chillon, the old gloomy castle on the rock, to see the instruments of torture, and death-chambers, the rusty chains on the rocky walls, the stony bed for those sentenced to death, the trap-doors through which the unfortunate beings were precipitated downwards and impaled on the iron spikes amidst the surf. They called it delightful to see all this. It was a place of execution, elevated by Byron's song into the world of poetry. Rudy felt it altogether the scene of executions ; he leaned against the great stone window-frames and looked into that deep, bluish-green water, and over to the little solitary island with the three acacias ; he wished himself there, and away from the whole chattering party ; but Babette felt herself particularly cheerful. She said she had been unusually entertained ; she found the cousin perfect.

" Yes, a perfect chatterbox ! " said Rudy ; and it was the first time that Rudy said anything which displeased her. The Englishman had presented her with a little book as a memento of Chillon ; it was a French version of Byron's poem, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, which Babette could read.

" The book may be good enough," said Rudy, " but I don't care for the much-combed fellow who gave it you."

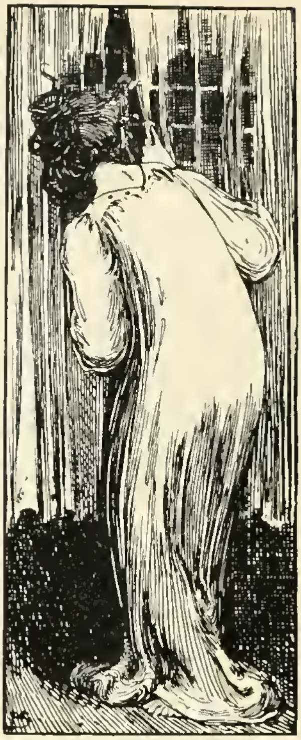
" He seemed to me like a meal-sack without any meal ! " said the miller, laughing at his own wit. Rudy also laughed, and said that it was very well put.

XI

THE COUSIN

A FEW days later, when Rudy came to call at the mill, he found the young Englishman there. Babette was just offering him some boiled trout, which she herself must have garnished with parsley, it looked so dainty. That was quite unnecessary. What business had the Englishman here? What did he come for ? To enjoy refreshments from the hands of Babette ? Rudy was jealous, and that amused Babette ; it gratified her to get a glimpse of all sides of his disposition, both strong and weak. Love was as yet but play to her, and she played with Rudy's whole heart ; and though, as one may say, he was her happiness, the chief thought of her life, the best and grandest in the world ; yes—but the more gloomy did he look, so much the more did her eyes laugh ; she could almost have kissed the blonde Englishman with the yellow whiskers, if by that means she could succeed in sending Rudy fuming away, for by that she would know how she was beloved by him. But this was not right or prudent of little Babette, only she was no more than nineteen. She did not think much of it ; she thought still less how she could explain her conduct, which was more free and easy with the young Englishman than was suitable for the miller's modest and recently betrothed daughter.

The mill was situated where the highroad from Bex runs under the snow-covered peak which the country people call the Diablerets, not far from a rapid, greyish-white mountain stream, like foaming soap-suds. This did not drive the mill ; it was driven by a lesser stream, which was precipitated from the rock on the other side of the river, and was dammed up by a stone wall so as to increase its force



PEEPED THROUGH THE CURTAINS.

and headway, and carried into a closed wooden basin by a broad channel away over the rapid river. This channel was so abundantly supplied with water that it overflowed, and made a wet, slippery path for those who used it as a short cut to the mill. The idea occurred to the young Englishman to use it, and dressed in white, like a working miller, he clambered over in the evening, guided by the light shining from Babette's room. But he had not learnt to climb, and nearly went head-foremost into the stream, but escaped with wet sleeves and bespattered trousers. Muddy and dirty he came below Babette's windows, clambered up into the old lime-tree and imitated the call of an owl, for he could not sing like any other bird. Babette heard it, and peeped through her thin curtains ; but when she saw the white man, and easily guessed who it was, her little heart beat with fright and with resentment. She hastily put out her light, saw that all the window-bolts were fastened, and left him to hoot.

It would be terrible if Rudy were now in the mill, but Rudy was not in the mill ; no, what was much worse, he was just below it. There was high talk, angry words ; there would be fighting, perhaps murder.

Babette opened her window in alarm, called Rudy's name, and told him to go away.

" You will not let me stay ! " he shouted ; " then it is an appointment ! You are expecting good friends, better than me ! Shame on you, Babette ! "

" You are detestable ! " said Babette ; " I hate you ! " and now she was crying. " Go ! go ! "

" I have not deserved this treatment ! " said he, and he went ; his cheeks were like fire, his heart was like fire.

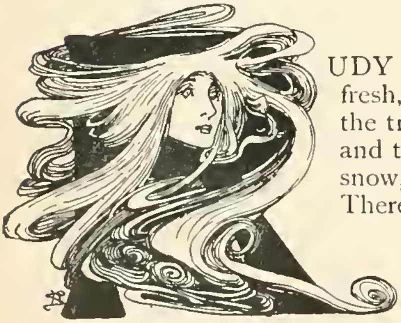
Babette flung herself on her bed, and wept.

" I love you so much, Rudy ! and you can believe that of me ! "

And she was angry, very angry, and that did her good, for otherwise she would have been deeply grieved ; now she could fall asleep and sleep the invigorating sleep of youth.

XII

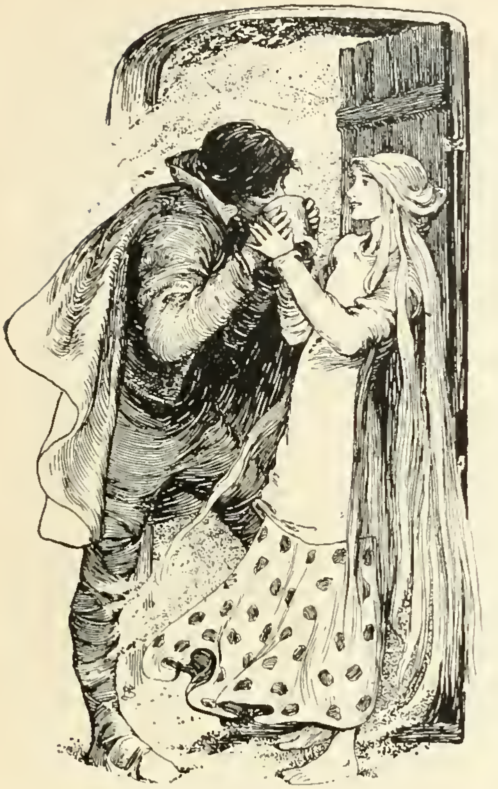
THE POWERS OF EVIL



RUDY left Bex, and took the homeward path up the mountains, in the fresh, cooling air, the domain of the Ice-Maiden. The thick foliage of the trees deep below him looked as if they were potato plants ; the firs and the bushes appeared even less, the Alpine roses bloomed near the snow, which lay in separate patches as if it were linen put out to bleach. There was a single blue gentian, and he crushed it with the butt-end of his gun.

Higher up he saw two chamois. Rudy's eyes sparkled, his thoughts took a new flight ; but he was not near enough to them for him to shoot with confidence ; so he climbed higher, where only coarse grass grew among the blocks of stone ; the chamois went placidly along the snow-fields. Rudy hurried on eagerly, surrounded by misty clouds, and on a sudden he stood in front of a precipitous rocky wall, and the rain began to fall in torrents.

He felt a parching thirst, his head was hot, but his limbs were cold. He seized his hunting-flask, but it was empty ; he had not thought of it when he rushed up the mountain. He had never been ill, but now he had a presentiment of it ; he was tired, he felt a desire to throw himself down and go to sleep, but everything was streaming with water. Strange objects vibrated before his eyes, but he saw on a sudden, what he had never seen there before, a newly-built low house, leaning against the rock, and at the door stood a young maiden. He thought it was the schoolmaster's Annette, whom he once had kissed at a dance, but it was not Annette, and yet he had seen her before, perhaps near Grindelwald, that night when he went home from the shooting match at Interlaken.



HELD THE BOWL TO HIS LIPS.

"Where do you come from?" he demanded.

"I am at home!" said she. "I am watching my flock."

"Your flock! Where do they graze? Here is only snow and rocks!"

"You are very clever!" said she with a laugh. "Here behind us, lower down, is a beautiful meadow! that is where my goats go. I take good care of them! I don't lose one; what is mine remains mine!"

"You are brave!" said Rudy.

"You also!" replied she.

"Have you any milk? Pray give me some, for I am intolerably thirsty!"

"I have something better than milk!" said she, "that you shall have! Yesterday some travellers came here with their guide; they forgot half a bottle of wine, such as you have never tasted; they will not fetch it, and I don't drink it, so you can have it."

And she came out with the wine, poured it into a wooden bowl, and gave it to Rudy.

"That is good!" said he. "I have never tasted any wine so warming and fiery!" and his eyes sparkled, and there came an animation, a glow into him, as if all sorrow and depression had evaporated; and the gushing, fresh human nature coursed through his veins.

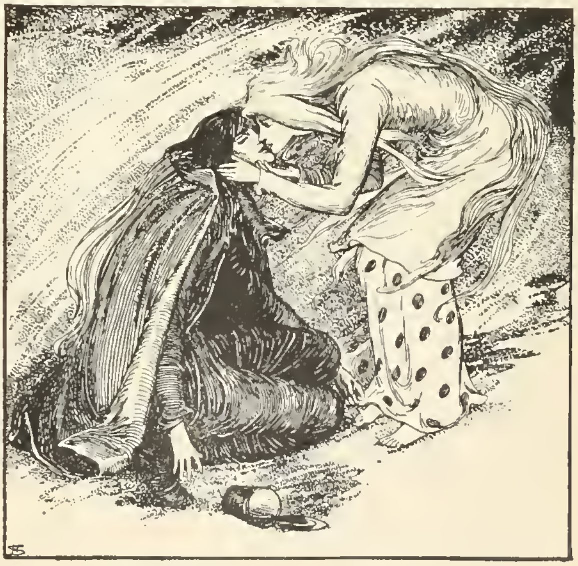
"But this is surely the schoolmaster's Annette!" he exclaimed. "Give me a kiss!"

"Then give me the pretty ring you have on your finger!"

"My engagement ring?"

"Exactly so!" said the girl; and she poured wine into the bowl, and held it to his lips, and he drank it. The joy of living was in his blood, he felt as if all the world belonged to him, and why should he worry? Everything is for us to enjoy and to make us happy! The stream of life is a stream of joy; to ride on it, to let ourselves float on its surface, that is felicity! He looked at the young girl: it was Annette, and still it was not Annette; even less was it the goblin phantom, as he had called her, he met near Grindelwald. The girl here on the mountain was fresh as the new-fallen snow, blooming as an Alpine rose, and nimble as a kid, but still formed out of Adam's ribs, as human as Rudy. And he put his arms around her, and gazed into her wonderfully clear eyes. It was only for a second, and in this—who can explain it? was it the spirit of life or of death that filled him?—was he raised on high, or did he sink down into the deep, murderous abyss of ice, deeper, ever deeper? He saw the walls of ice like blue-green glass; endless crevasses gaped around him, and water dripped sounding like chimes, and gleaming like pearls in bluish-white flames. The Ice-Maiden gave him a kiss, and it chilled him through his backbone and into his brain. He gave one cry of pain, dragged himself away, stumbled and fell, and it was night before his eyes. The powers of evil had played their game.

When he reopened his eyes the Alpine maiden was gone, as was also the sheltering cottage. Water drove down the bare rocky wall, the snow lay all round him; Rudy shivered



THE ICE-MAIDEN GAVE HIM A KISS.

with cold, he was soaked to the skin, and his ring was gone, his engagement ring which Babette had given him. His gun lay by him in the snow; he took it up and wished to discharge it, but it missed fire. Watery clouds lay like solid masses of snow in the crevasse; Giddiness sat there and lured on her helpless prey, and under her there was a sound in the deep crevasse as if a huge rock were falling, crushing and sweeping away everything that would stop it in its fall.

But in the mill Babette sat weeping. Rudy had not been near her for six days—he who was in the wrong, he who ought to ask her forgiveness, because she loved him with her whole heart.

XIII

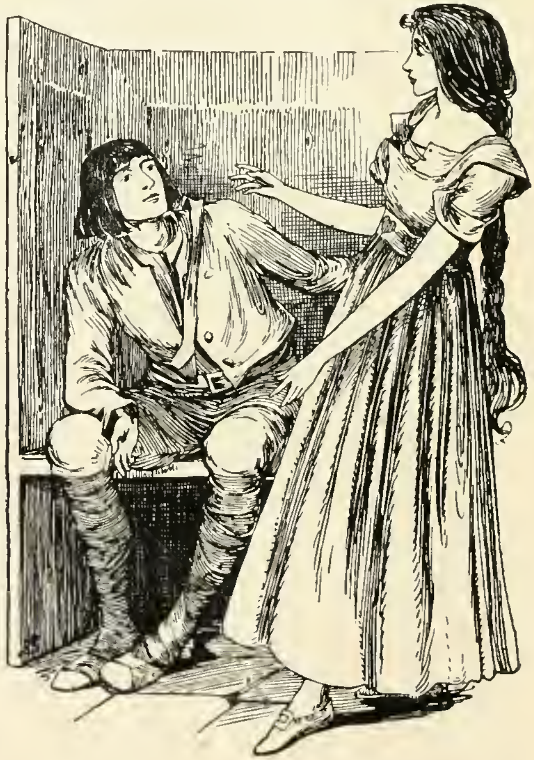
IN THE MILLER'S HOUSE

"WHAT horrid nonsense it is with these human beings!" said the parlour cat to the kitchen cat. "Now it is broken off again with Babette and Rudy. She is crying, and he does not think any more of her."

"I can't endure that," said the kitchen cat.

"No more can I," said the parlour cat, "but I won't grieve over it! Babette may now be the beloved of the red whiskers! but he has not been here since he wished to get on the roof."

The powers of evil have their game, both without us and within us. This Rudy had discovered and thought over. What was it that had taken place about him and in him on the top of the mountain? Was it a vision, or a feverish dream? Never before had he known fever or illness. He had made an examination of his own heart when he judged Babette. Could he confess to Babette the thoughts which assailed him in the hour of temptation? He had lost her ring, and it was exactly in that loss that she had regained him. Would she confess to him? It seemed as if his heart would burst asunder when he thought of her; there arose within him so many memories; he seemed really to see her, laughing like a merry child. Many an affectionate word she had spoken in the abundance of her heart came like a gleam of sunshine into his breast, and soon it was all sunshine therein for Babette.



THEREFORE BABETTE LECTURED HIM.

She might be able to confess to him, and she ought to do so.

He went to the mill, and confessed, beginning with a kiss, and ending in the admission that he was the offender. It was a great offence in him that he could distrust Babette's fidelity; it was almost unpardonable! Such distrust, such impetuosity might bring them both to grief. Yes, indeed! and therefore Babette lectured him, and she was pleased with herself, and it suited her so well. But in one thing Rudy was right—godmother's relation was a chatterbox! She wished to burn the book which he had given her, and not have the least thing in her possession that could remind her of him.

"Now that's all over!" said the parlour cat. "Rudy is here again, they understand each other, and that is the greatest good fortune, they say."

"I heard in the night," said the kitchen cat, "the rats say the greatest good fortune is to eat tallow-candles and to have quite enough rancid bacon. Now, which shall I believe—rats, or a pair of lovers?"

"Neither of them!" said the parlour cat. "That is always safest."

The greatest good fortune for Rudy and Babette was close at hand; the wedding day — the most beautiful day, as they called it.

But the marriage was not to take place at the church at Bex, or in the miller's house; the godmother wished the wedding to be held at her house, and that they should be married in the pretty little church at Montreux. The miller stuck to it that this request should be complied with; he alone was aware what the godmother intended to give the bride for a wedding present, and considered they ought to make so slight a concession. The day was fixed. On the previous evening they were to journey to Villeneuve, and to proceed in the early morning to Montreux by boat, that the godmother's daughters might deck the bride.

"There will be a feast here the day after the wedding," said the parlour cat. "Otherwise I would not give one mew for the lot."

"There *will* be a feast!" said the kitchen cat; "ducks and pigeons are killed, and a whole deer hangs on the wall. It makes my mouth water to look at it! In the morning they start on their journey."

Yes, in the morning! This evening Rudy and Babette sat together, as betrothed, for the last time at the mill.

Out of doors was the Alpine glow, the evening bells chimed, the daughters of the sunbeams sang: "May the best thing happen!"

XIV

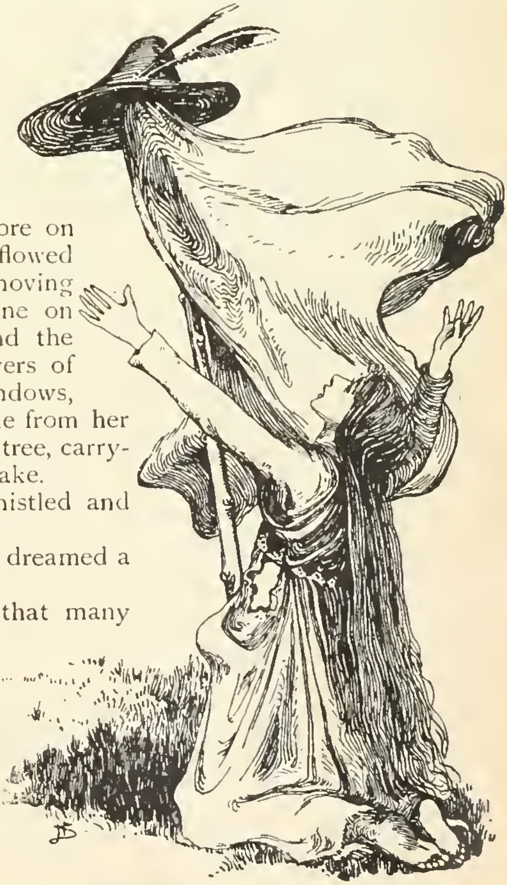
VISIONS IN THE NIGHT

THE sun was set, the clouds came down in the Rhone valley between the high mountains, the wind blew from the south, a wind from Africa, but, over the high Alps, a tempest, rending the clouds asunder, and, when the wind had swept by, for one instant it was quite still; the torn clouds hung in fantastic shapes among the tree-clad mountains, and over the rushing Rhone; they hung in shapes like Antediluvian monsters, like eagles hovering in the air and like frogs leaping in a pool; they came down over the rapid stream, they sailed over it although they sailed in the air. The river bore on its surface a pine-tree torn up by the roots, watery eddies flowed before it; that was Giddiness—there were more than one—moving in a circle on the onward-rushing stream. The moon shone on the snow-covered mountain tops, on the black woods and the strange white clouds, visions of night, spirits of the powers of nature; the mountain peasants saw them through the windows, they sailed below in crowds before the Ice-Maiden, who came from her glacier palace, and sat on her frail craft, the uprooted pine tree, carrying the glacier water with her down the stream to the open lake.

"The wedding guests are coming!" That was what whistled and sang in the air and the water.

There were visions without and visions within. Babette dreamed a strange dream.

It appeared to her as if she was married to Rudy, and that many years had passed. He was now hunting chamois, but she was at home, and there sat with her the young Englishman with the yellow whiskers. His glances were warm, his words had a power of witchcraft; he held out his hands to her, and she was obliged to follow him. They left her home and went down the mountain, ever down, and it seemed to Babette as if there lay a burden on her heart, which was always growing heavier. It was a sin against Rudy, a sin against God. And then on a sudden she was standing deserted; her clothes were torn by the thorns,



ONLY HIS HUNTING-JACKET AND HAT.

her hair was grey. She looked up in her grief, and on the edge of a cliff she saw Rudy. She held out her arms towards him, but did not venture to call or pray. Nor would it have helped her, for she quickly saw that it was not he, but only his hunting-jacket and hat, which were hanging on his alpenstock, as hunters set them to deceive the chamois. And in the depth of her affliction Babette wailed out: "Oh, that I had died on the day I was married, the day of my greatest happiness! that would have been a happy life! that would have been the best thing that could happen for me and Rudy! None knows his future!" and in her impious grief she precipitated herself into a deep chasm in the rocks. The spell was broken, and with a cry she awoke.

The dream had vanished, but she knew that she had dreamed something dreadful, and that she had dreamed of the young Englishman, whom she had not seen or thought of for several months. Was he in Montreux? Was she about to see him at the wedding? Her pretty lips tightened at the thought, and she knit her brows. But soon there came a smile, and her eyes gleamed; the sun was shining so beautifully outside, and the morning was that of her wedding with Rudy.

He was already in the parlour when she came down, and soon they were away to Villeneuve. They were a very happy couple; and the miller with them laughed and beamed in the highest spirits; he was a good father and an upright man.

"Now we are the masters at home!" said the parlour cat.

XV

CONCLUSION

IT was not yet evening when the three happy people reached Villeneuve, and sat down to their repast. After dinner the miller sat in an easy chair with his pipe, and took a little nap. The young couple went arm in arm out of the town, then by the carriage road under the rocks so thick with bushes, skirting the deep bluish-green lake. The gloomy Chillon reflected its grey walls and massive towers in the clear water; the little island with the three acacia trees lay still nearer, appearing like a bouquet in the lake.

"It must be delightful out there!" said Babette; she had still the strongest inclination to go there, and that wish could be immediately fulfilled: there lay a boat by the bank, the line that held it was easy to unfasten. They could not see any one from whom to ask permission, and so they took the boat, for Rudy could row well.

The oars caught hold of the water like the fins of a fish, the water that is so pliable and yet so strong, that is all a back to bear, all a mouth to devour, mildly smiling, softness itself, and yet overwhelming and strong to rend asunder. The water foamed in the wake of the boat, in which in a few minutes the couple had gained the island, where they landed. There was not more than room enough on it for two to dance.

Rudy turned Babette round two or three times, and then, hand in hand, they seated themselves on the little bench beneath the overhanging acacias, and gazed into each other's eyes, while all around them was illuminated in the splendour of the setting sun. The pine forests on the mountains put on a lilac hue like heather when in flower, and where the trees ceased and the bare rock came into view it glowed as if the mountain was transparent; the clouds in the heavens were lighted up as if with red fire, the whole lake was like a fresh, blushing rose-leaf. Already, as the shadows lifted themselves up to the snow-clad hills of Savoy, they became bluish, but the topmost peaks shone as if of red lava, and for one moment looked as if these glowing masses had raised themselves from the bowels of the earth and were not yet extinguished. That was an Alpine glow, such as Rudy and Babette could never hope to see the equal of. The snow-covered Dent du Midi had a splendour like the face of the full moon when it is rising.

"So much beauty! so much happiness!" they both said.

"The earth has no more to give me!" said Rudy. "An evening hour like this is a whole lifetime! How often have I felt my good fortune as I feel it now, and thought, 'If all were now ended, how fortunately I should have lived! How blessed is this world!' and the day ended; but a new one began again, and it seemed to me that it was fairer still! Heaven is infinitely good, Babette!"

"I am so happy!" said she.

"Earth has nothing more to give me!" exclaimed Rudy.

And the evening bells chimed from the mountains of Savoy, from the mountains of Switzerland; the dark blue Jura lifted itself towards the west in a golden lustre.

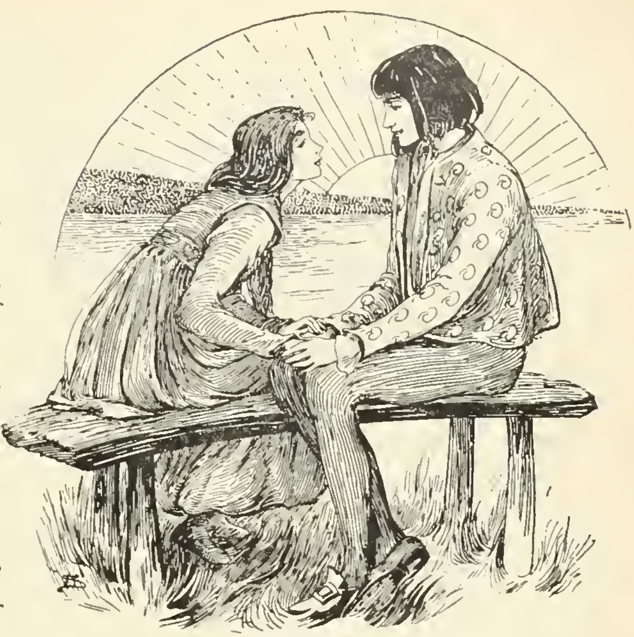
"God give thee what is grandest and best!" exclaimed Babette.

"That He will!" said Rudy. "To-morrow I shall have it! to-morrow thou wilt be mine! my own little, charming wife!"

"The boat!" cried Babette at that moment.

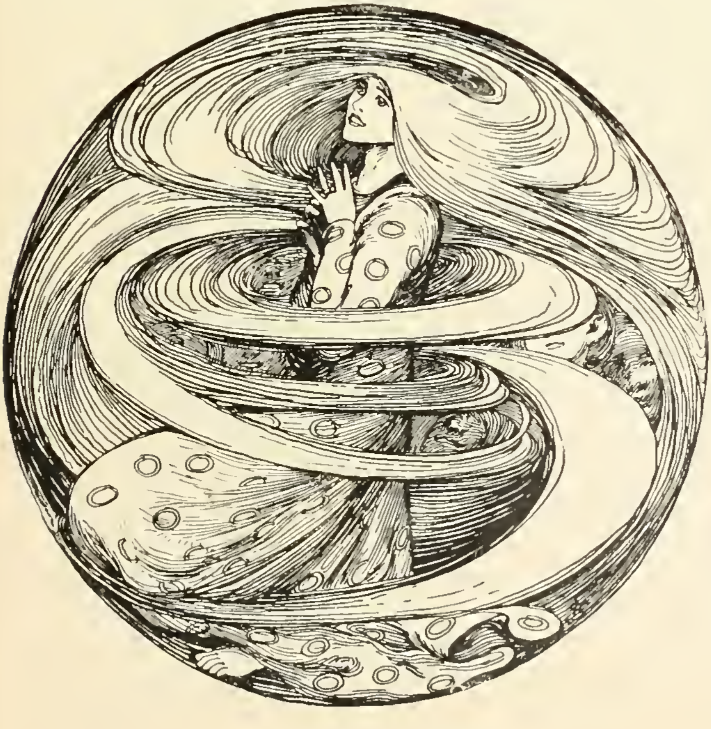
The boat, which was to take them back, had broken loose and drifted from the island.

"I will fetch it!" said Rudy, throwing off his coat; and he pulled off his boots, sprang into the lake, and took rapid strokes towards the boat.



HAND IN HAND, SEATED ON THE LITTLE BENCH.

Cold and deep was the clear, bluish-green water from the mountain glacier. Rudy looked down below, only one single glance—and he thought he saw a golden ring rolling, and gleaming, and playing—he thought of his lost betrothal ring, and the ring became larger, and expanded into a sparkling circle, and in that shone the clear glacier; interminable deep crevasses yawned around him, and the dripping water sounded like a carillon of bells and gleamed with bluish flames; in an instant he saw what we have to tell in so many words. Young huntsmen and young maidens, men and women, once swallowed up in the crevasses of the glacier, stood here alive, with open eyes and smiling mouth, and deep under them came the sound of church bells from submerged towns; a congregation knelt under the church arches, pieces of ice formed the organ-pipes, mountain torrents played on it. The Ice-Maiden sat on the clear, transparent floor; she raised herself up towards Rudy, kissed his feet, and there ran a deadly coldness through his limbs, an electric shock—ice and fire! one does not know the difference at the first touch.

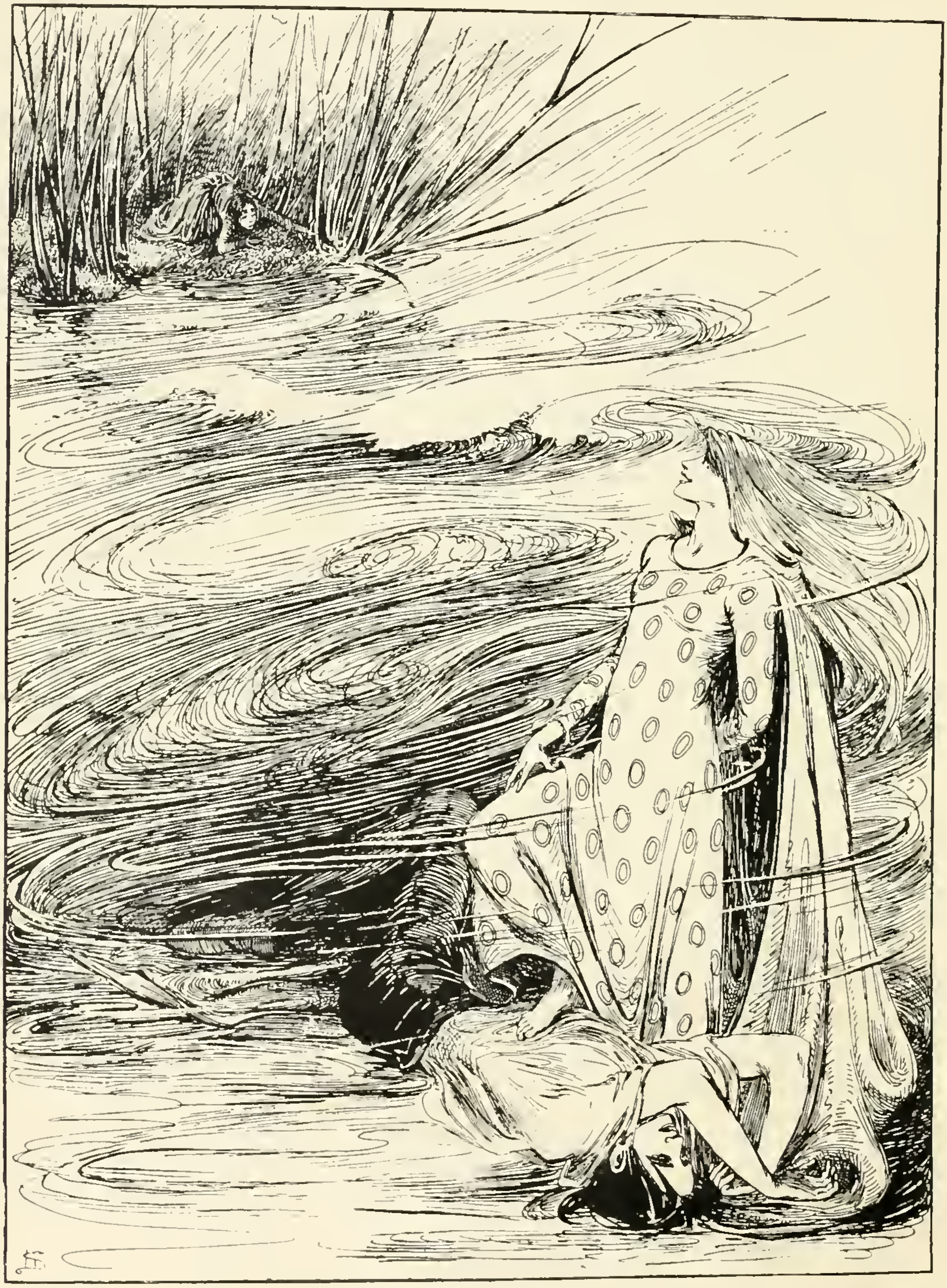


THE RING EXPANDED INTO A SPARKLING CIRCLE.

"Mine! mine!" sounded about him and in him. "I kissed thee when thou wast little! I kissed thee on the mouth! now I kiss thee on the toe and on the heel—thou art mine altogether!"

And he was lost in the clear blue water.

All was still; the church bells ceased to ring, the last notes died away with the splendour on the red clouds. "Mine thou art!" sounded again in the depths; "Mine thou art!" sounded in the heights, from the Infinite.



THE ICE-MAIDEN STOOD MAJESTIC WITH RUDY AT HER FEET.

The icy kiss of Death overcame that which was corruptible; the prelude was over before the drama of life could begin, the discord resolved into harmony.

It is beautiful to fly from love to Love, from earth into the Heaven.

Do you call that a sad story?

Unfortunate Babette! it was a fearful time for her! the boat drifted farther and farther away. No one on shore knew that the bridal pair were on the little island. Night drew on; the clouds descended, and it became dark. She stood there alone, despairing, weeping. A furious storm broke over her; lightning illuminated the mountains of Jura, Switzerland, and Savoy, and thunder rolled continuously. The lightning was almost as bright as the sun; one could see each single vine as at mid-day, and then immediately everything would be shrouded in the thickest darkness. The flashes formed knots, rings, zig-zags; they struck round about the lake, they shone from all sides, while the peals were increased by the echoes. On the land people drew the boats higher up the banks; every living thing sought shelter, and the rain poured down in torrents.

"Wherever are Rudy and Babette in this furious storm?" said the miller.

Babette sat with clasped hands, with her head in her lap, speechless with grief.

"In that deep water!" she said within herself. "He is deep down, as under the glacier!"

And she remembered what Rudy had told her of his mother's death, of his own rescue, and how he had been brought up as one dead out of the crevasse in the glacier. "The Ice-Maiden has him again!"

And the lightning flashed as blinding as a ray of the sun on the white snow. Babette started; the lake lifted itself at that instant, like a shining glacier; the Ice-Maiden stood there, majestic, pale blue, shining, and at her feet lay Rudy's corpse. "Mine!" said she; and round about was again darkness and gloom, and rushing water.

"Cruel!" moaned Babette. "Why then should he die, when the happy day was come! O God! enlighten my understanding! shine into my heart! I cannot understand Thy ways, but I bow to Thy power and wisdom!"

And God shone into her heart. A flash of thought, a ray of light, her dream of last night, as if it were real, seemed to shine through her; she called to mind the words which she had spoken: she had wished for *the best thing* for herself and Rudy.

"Woe is me! was that the seed of sin in my heart? was my dream a future life, whose string must be snapped for my salvation? Miserable me!"

She sat wailing in the gloomy, dark night. In the deep stillness she thought that Rudy's words sounded again, the last he had uttered: "Earth has nothing more to give me!" They had been said in the abundance of happiness, they came back to her in the depth of her grief.

* * * * *

A couple of years have elapsed. The lake smiles, the banks smile; the vines put forth swelling grapes; steamboats with waving flags hurry past, pleasure-boats with both their sails set fly like white butterflies over the expanse of water; the railway above Chillon has been opened, and leads deep into the Rhone valley. At every station visitors get out; they come with their red guide-books and read to themselves what remarkable things they have to see. They visit Chillon, they see from thence in the lake the little island with the three acacias, and read in the book of a bridal pair who, in the year 1856, sailed thither one evening, of the bridegroom's death, and: "next morning the bride's despairing cry was first heard on the shore."

But the guide-books make no mention of Babette's quiet life with her father, not in the mill—strangers live there—but in the pretty house near the railway station, where from the windows she often looks out in the afternoon over the chestnut trees to the snow mountains where Rudy used to disport himself; she sees in the evenings the Alpine glow, the Children of the Sun encamping above and repeating the song of the traveller whose mantle the whirlwind carried away; it took the covering, but not the man himself.

There is a rosy lustre on the snow of the mountains, there is a rosy lustre in every heart where the thought is: "God lets that which is best come to pass!" but that is not always revealed to us as it was to Babette in her dream.

❧ ❧ ❧

The Storks

IN the last house in a little village there lay a stork's nest. The mother stork sat in the nest, beside her four little ones, who were stretching forth their heads with their little black bills, that had not yet turned red. At a short distance, on the top of the roof, stood the father stork, as stiff and bolt upright as well could be. He had drawn up one leg under him, in order not to remain quite idle while he stood sentry. One might have taken him to be carved out of wood, so motionless was he. "It no doubt looks very grand for my wife to have a sentinel by her nest!" thought he. "They can't know that I am her husband, and they will, of course, conclude that I have been commanded to stand here. It looks so noble!" And he continued standing on one leg.

A whole swarm of children were playing in the street below; and when they perceived the stork, the forwardest of the boys sang the old song about the stork, in which the others soon joined. Only each sang it just as he happened to recollect it:—

"Stork, stork, fly home and rest,
Nor on one leg thus sentry keep!
Your wife is sitting in her nest,
To lull her little ones to sleep.
There's a halter for one,
There's a stake for another;
For a third there's a gun,
And a spit for his brother!"

"Only listen to what the boys are singing!" said the young storks. "They say we shall be hanged and burned."

"You shouldn't mind what they say," said the mother stork; "if you don't listen, it won't hurt you."

But the boys went on singing, and pointing at the stork with their fingers. Only one boy, whose name was Peter, said it was a shame to make game of animals, and would not join the rest. The mother stork comforted her young ones. "Don't trouble your heads about it," said she; "only see how quiet your father stands, and that on one leg!"

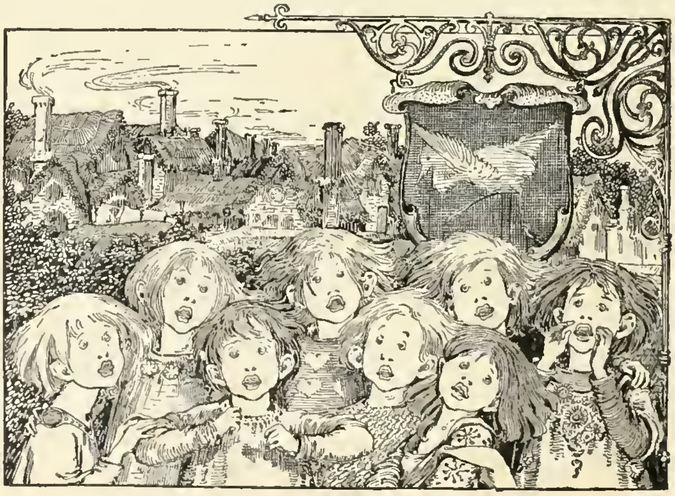
"We are frightened!" said the young ones, drawing back their heads into the nest.

Next day, when the children had again assembled to play, they no sooner saw the storks than they began their song:—

"There's a halter for one,
There's a stake for another."

"Are we to be hanged and burned?" asked the young storks.

"No; to be sure not," said the mother. "You shall learn how to fly, and I'll train you. Then we will fly to the meadows, and pay a visit to the frogs, who will bow to us in the water, and sing 'Croak! croak!' And then we'll eat them up, and that will be a right good treat!"



"STORK, STORK, FLY HOME AND REST."

"And what next?" asked the youngsters.

"Then all the storks in the land will assemble, and the autumn manœuvres will begin; and every one must know how to fly properly, for that is very important. For whoever does not fly as he ought is pierced to death by the general's beak; therefore, mind you learn something when the drilling begins."

"Then we shall be spitted after all, as the boys said—and hark! they are singing it again."

"Attend to me and not to them," said the mother stork. "After the principal review we shall fly to the warm countries, far from here, over hills and forests. We fly to Egypt, where there are three-cornered stone houses, one point of which reaches to the clouds—they are called pyramids, and are older than a stork can well imagine. And in that same land there is a river which overflows its banks, and turns the whole country into mire. We then go into the mire and eat frogs."

"O—oh!" exclaimed all the youngsters.

"It is a delightful place, truly! One can eat all day long, and while we are feasting there, in this country there is not a green leaf left upon the trees. It is so cold here that the very clouds freeze in lumps, and fall down in little rags." It was snow she meant, only she could not explain it better.

"Will the naughty boys freeze in lumps?" asked the young storks.

"No, they will not freeze in lumps, but they will be very near doing so, and they will be obliged to sit moping in a gloomy room, while you will be flying about in foreign lands, where there are flowers and warm sunshine."

Some time had now passed by, and the young ones had grown so big that they could stand upright in the nest, and look all about them; and the father stork came every day with nice frogs, little serpents, and all such dainties as storks delight in, that he could find. And how funny it was to see all the clever feats he performed to amuse them! He would lay his head right round upon his tail; then he would clatter with his bill just like a little rattle; and then he would tell them stories, all relating to swamps and fens.

"Come, you must now learn to fly," said the mother stork one day, and the four youngsters were all obliged to come out on the top of the roof. How they did stagger! They tried to poise themselves with their wings, but they had nearly fallen to the ground below.

"Look at me," said the mother. "This is the way to hold your head! And you must place your feet so! Left! right! Left! right! That's what will help you forward in the world."

She then flew a little way, and the young ones took a little leap without assistance — but plump! down they fell, for their bodies were still too heavy.

"I won't fly!" said one youngster, creeping back into the nest. "I don't care about going to warm countries."

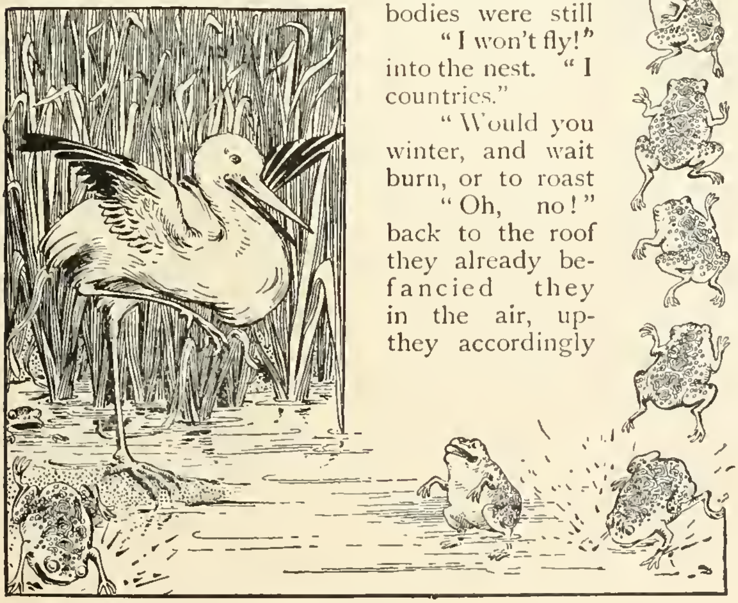
"Would you like to stay and freeze here in the winter, and wait till the boys come to hang, to burn, or to roast you? Well, then, I'll call them."

"Oh, no!" said the young stork, hopping back to the roof like the others. On the third day they already began to fly a little, and then they fancied they should be able at once to hover in the air, upborne by their wings, and this they accordingly attempted, when down they fell, and were then obliged to flap their wings as quick as they could. The boys now came into the street below, singing their song:—

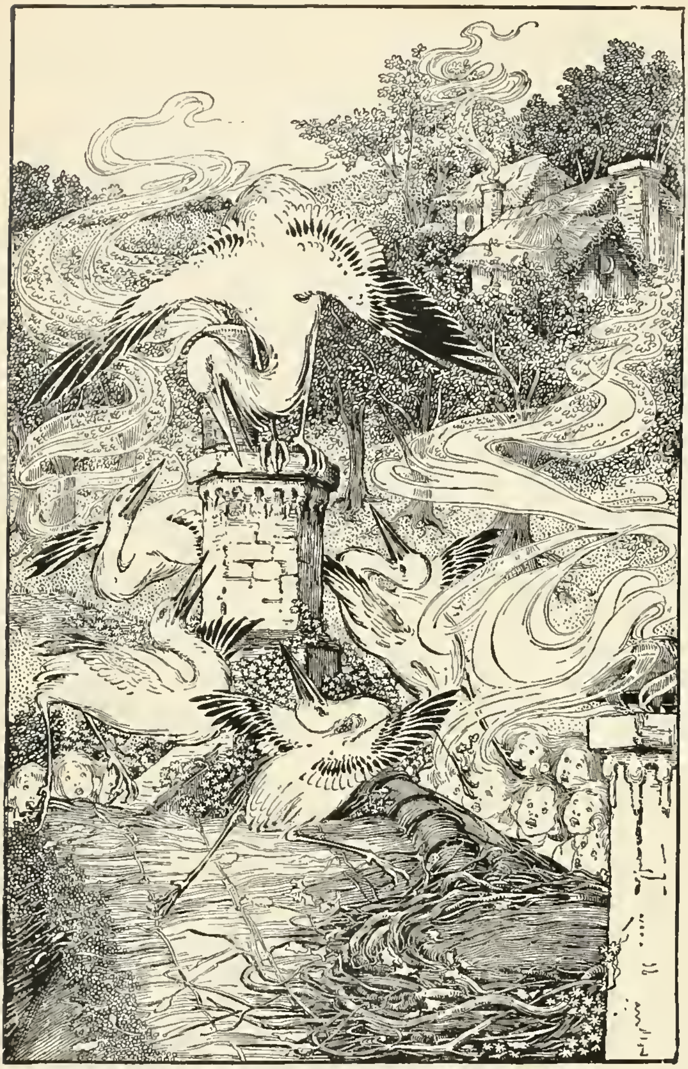
"Stork, stork, fly home and rest."

"Shan't we fly down and peck them?" asked the young ones.

"No; leave them alone,' said the mother. "Attend to me—



"WE THEN GO INTO THE MIRE AND EAT FROGS"



THE FOUR YOUNGSTERS WERE ALL OBLIGED TO COME OUT ON THE TOP OF THE ROOF.

that's far more important—one—two—three! Now let's fly round to the right. One—two—three! now to the left, round the chimney. Now that was very well! That last flap of your wings was so graceful and so proper, that you shall have leave to fly with me to-morrow to the marsh. Several genteel families of storks are coming thither with their children; now let me see that mine are the best bred of all, and mind you strut about with a due degree of pride, for that looks well, and makes one respected."

"But shan't we take revenge on the naughty boys?" asked the young storks.

"Let them scream away as much as they like. You can fly up to the clouds, and go to the land of the Pyramids, while they are freezing, and can neither see a green leaf nor eat a sweet apple."

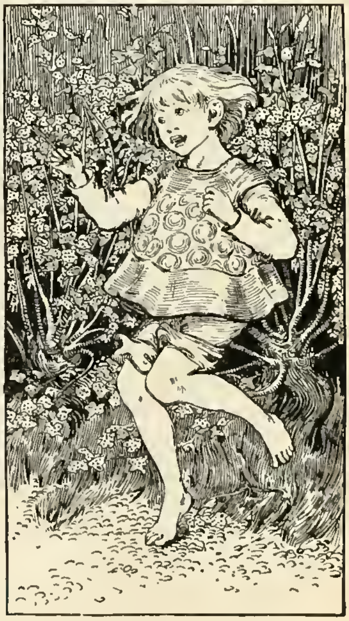
"But we wish to be revenged," whispered the young ones amongst each other; and then they were drilled again.

Of all the boys in the street, none seemed more bent on singing the song that made game of the storks than the one who had first introduced it; and he was a little fellow, scarcely more than six years old. The young storks, to be sure, fancied that he was at least a hundred, because he was so much bigger than their parents; and besides, what did they know about the ages of children or of grown men? So their whole vengeance was to be aimed at this boy, because he had been the first to begin, and had always persisted in mocking at them. The young storks were very much exasperated, and when they grew bigger, they grew still less patient of insults, and their mother was at length obliged to promise that they should be revenged, but only on the day of their departure.

"We must first see how you will acquit yourselves at the great review. If you don't do your duty properly, and the general runs his beak through your chests, then the boys will be in the right—at least, so far. So we must wait and see."

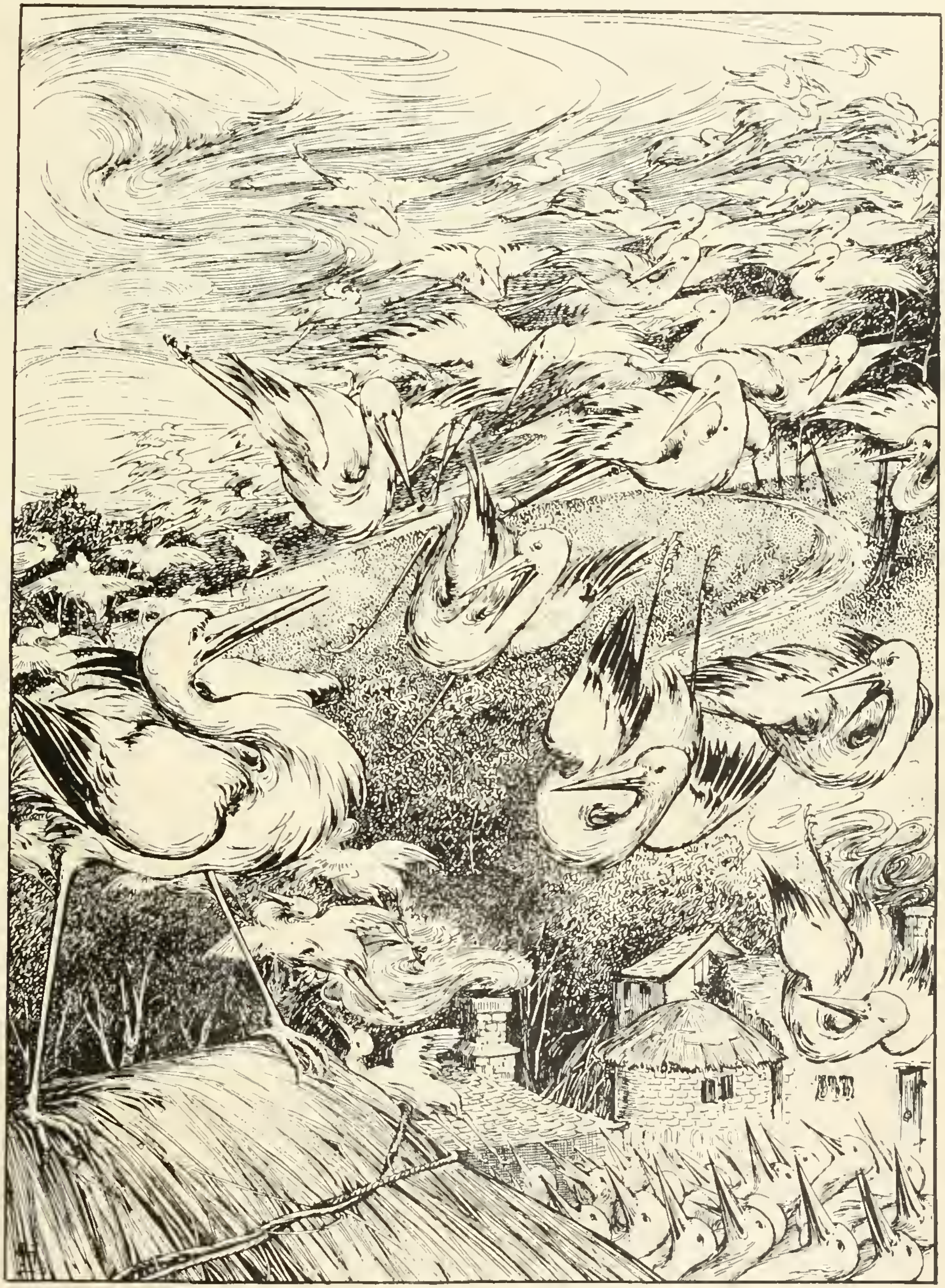
"Yes, you shall see," said the youngsters; and they took a deal of pains, and practised every day, till they flew so elegantly and so lightly that it was a pleasure to see them.

The autumn now set in, when all the storks began to assemble and to start for the warm countries, leaving winter behind them. And there were evolutions for you! The young fledglings were

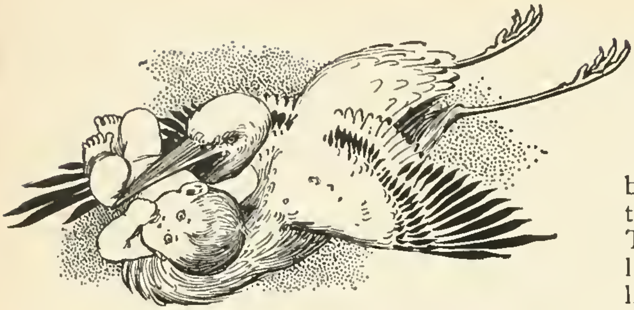


A LITTLE FELLOW, SCARCELY MORE THAN SIX YEARS OLD.

set to fly over forests and villages, to see whether they could acquit themselves properly, for they had a long voyage before them. But the young storks gave such proof of capacity, that their certificate ran as follows :—" Remarkably well—with the present of a frog and a serpent." This was the most palpable proof of the satisfaction they had given ; and they might now eat the frog and the serpent, which they lost no time in doing.



THERE WERE EVOLUTIONS FOR YOU !



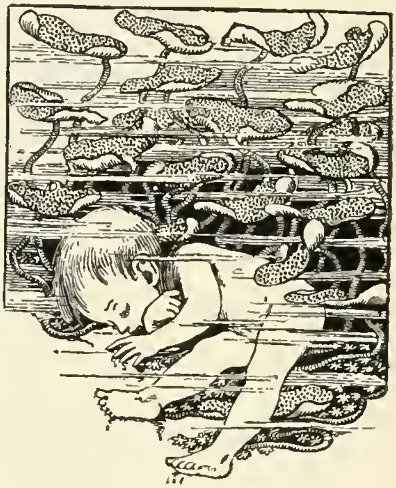
"NOW WE'LL FLY TO THE POND, AND FETCH ONE FOR EVERY CHILD."

"Now for our revenge!" said they.

"Yes, assuredly," said the mother stork; "and I have found out what would be the fairest revenge to take. I know where lies the pond in which all the little human children are waiting till the storks shall come and bring them to their parents. The prettiest little children lie sleeping there, and dreaming far more sweetly than they will ever dream hereafter. Most parents wish for such a little infant, and most children wish for a sister or a brother. Now we'll fly to the pond, and fetch one for every child who did not sing the naughty song, and make game of the storks."

"But the naughty, ugly boy, who was the first to begin singing it," cried the young storks; "what shall we do with him?"

"In the pond lies a little infant, who has dreamed itself to death. We'll take him home to the naughty boy, and then he'll cry, because we've brought him a little dead brother. But as for the good boy—you have not forgotten him—who said it was a shame to make game of animals, we will bring him both a brother and a sister. And as the boy's name is Peter, you shall all be called Peter after him."



"IN THE POND LIES A LITTLE INFANT, WHO HAS DREAMED ITSELF TO DEATH."

And all was done as agreed upon, and all storks were henceforth named Peter, and are called so still.

The Ugly Duckling

IN the fields how beautiful, how fresh everything looked! It was summer, and the corn was yellow, the oats were green, the hayricks were standing in the verdant meadows, and the stork was walking about on his long, red legs, chattering away in Egyptian—the language he had learned from his lady mother. The cornfields and meadows were surrounded by large forests, in the middle of which lay deep lakes. Oh, it was lovely indeed to walk abroad in the country just then!

In a sunny spot stood an old country house, encircled by canals. Between the wall and the water's edge there grew huge burdock leaves, that had shot up to such a height that a little child might have stood upright under the tallest of them; and this spot was as wild as though it had been situated in the depths of a wood. In this snug retirement a duck was sitting on her nest to hatch her young; but she began to think it a wearisome task, as the little ones seemed very backward in making their appearance; besides, she had few visitors, for the other ducks preferred swimming about in the canals, instead of being at the trouble of climbing up the slope, and then sitting under a burdock leaf to gossip with her.

At length one egg cracked, and then another. "Peep! peep!" cried they, as each yolk became a live thing, and popped out its head.

"Quack! quack!" said the mother, and they tried to cackle like her, while they looked all about them under the green leaves; and she allowed them to look to their hearts' content, because green is good for the eyes.

"How large the world is, to be sure!" said the young ones. And truly enough, they had rather more room than when they were still in the egg-shell.

"Do you fancy this is the whole world?" cried the mother. "Why, it reaches far away beyond the other side of the garden, down to the parson's field; though I never went to such a distance as that. But are you not all there?" continued she, rising. "No, faith! you are not; for there still lies the largest egg. I wonder how long this business is to last—I really begin to grow quite tired of it!" And she sat down once more.

"Well, how are you getting on?" inquired an old duck, who came to pay her a visit.

"This egg takes a deal of hatching," answered the sitting duck. "It won't break; but just look at the others, are they not the prettiest ducklings ever seen? They are the image of their father, who, by the bye, does not trouble himself to come and see me."

"Let me look at the egg that won't break," quoth the old duck. "Take my word for it, it must be a guinea-fowl's egg. I was once deceived in the same way, and I bestowed a deal of care and anxiety on the youngsters, for they are afraid of water. I could not make them take to it. I stormed and raved, but it was of no use. Let's see the egg. Sure enough, it is a guinea-fowl's egg. Leave it alone, and set about teaching the other children to swim."

"I'll just sit upon it a bit longer," said the duck; "for since I have sat so long, a few days more won't make much odds."

"Please yourself," said the old duck, as she went away.

At length the large egg cracked. "Peep! peep!" squeaked the youngster, as he crept out. How big and ugly he was, to be sure! The duck looked at him, saying: "Really, this is a most enormous duckling! None of the others are like him. I wonder whether he is a guinea-chick after all? Well, we shall soon see when we get down to the water, for in he shall go, though I push him in myself."

On the following morning the weather was most delightful, and the sun was shining brightly on the green burdock leaves. The mother duck took her young brood down to the canal. Splash into the water she went. "Quack! quack!" cried she, and forthwith one duckling after another jumped in. The water closed over their heads for a moment; but they soon rose to the surface again, and swam about so nicely, just as if their legs paddled them about of their own accord; and they had all taken to the water, even the ugly, grey-coated youngster swam about with the rest.

"Nay, he is no guinea-chick," said she. "Only look how capitally he uses his legs, and how steady he keeps himself—he's every inch my own child. And really he's very pretty when one comes to look at him attentively. Quack! quack!" added she; "now come along, and I'll take you into high society, and introduce you to the duck-yard; but mind you keep close to me, that nobody may tread upon you, and, above all, beware of the cat."

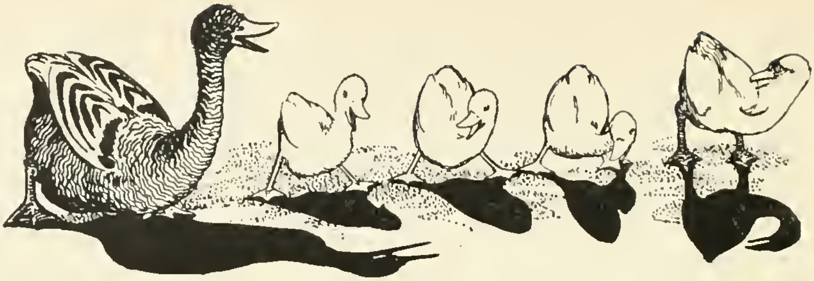
They now reached the farmyard, where there was a great hubbub. Two families were fighting for an eel's head, which, in the end, was carried off by the cat.

"See, children, that's the way with the world!" remarked the mother of the ducklings, licking her beak, for she would have been very glad to have had the eel's head for herself. "Now move on!" said she, "and mind you cackle properly, and bow your head before that old duck yonder. She is the noblest born of them all, and is of Spanish descent, and that's why she is so dignified; and look! she has a red rag tied to her leg, which is the greatest mark of distinction that can be bestowed upon a duck, as it shows an anxiety not to lose her, and that she should be recognised by both beast and man. Now cackle—and don't turn in your toes; a well-bred duckling spreads his feet wide apart, like papa and mamma, in this sort of way. Now bend your neck, and say 'Quack!'"

The ducklings did as they were bid; but the other ducks, after looking at them, only said aloud: "Now, look! here comes another set, as if we were not numerous enough already. And, bless me! what a queer-looking chap one of the ducklings is, to be sure; we can't put up with him!" And one of the throng darted forward and bit him in the neck.

"Leave him alone," said the mother; "he did no harm to any one."

"No; but he is too big and uncouth," said the biting duck, "and therefore he wants a thrashing."



"NOW BEND YOUR NECK, AND SAY 'QUACK!'"

"Mamma has a sweet little family," said the old duck with the rag about her leg; "they are all pretty except one, who is rather ill-favoured. I wish mamma could polish him a bit."

"I'm afraid that will be impossible, your grace," said the mother of the ducklings. "It's true, he is not pretty, but he has a very good disposition, and swims as well, or perhaps better than all the others put together. However, he may grow prettier, and perhaps become smaller; he remained too long in the egg-shell, and therefore his figure is not properly formed." And with this she smoothed down the ruffled feathers of his neck, adding: "At all events, as he is a male duck, it won't matter so much. I think he'll prove strong, and be able to fight his way through the world."

"The other ducklings are elegant little creatures," said the old duck. "Now, make yourself at home; and if you should happen to find an eel's head, you can bring it to me."

And so the family made themselves comfortable.

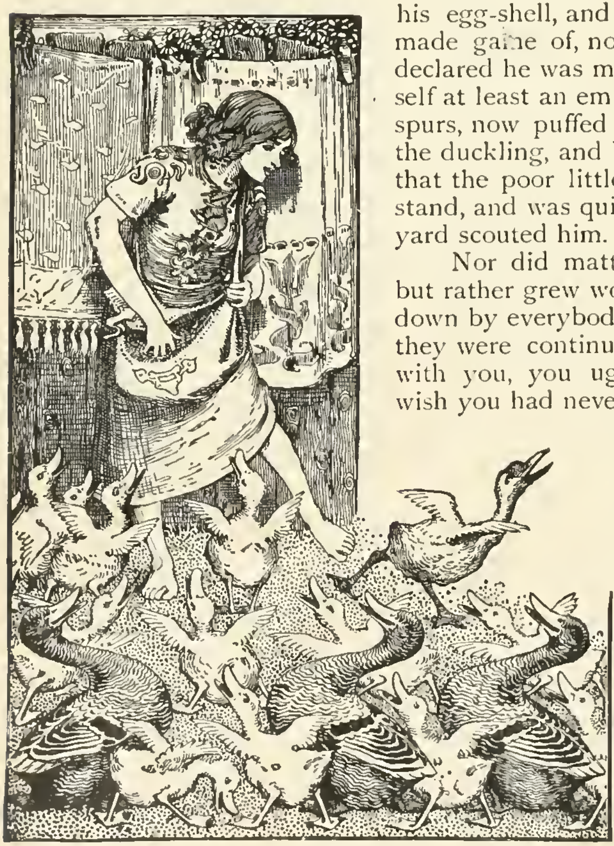
But the poor duckling who had been the last to creep out of his egg-shell, and looked so ugly, was bitten, pushed about, and made game of, not only by the ducks, but by the hens. They all declared he was much too big, and a guinea-fowl who fancied himself at least an emperor, because he had come into the world with spurs, now puffed himself up like a vessel in full sail and flew at the duckling, and blustered till his head turned completely red, so that the poor little thing did not know where he could walk or stand, and was quite grieved at being so ugly that the whole farmyard scouted him.

Nor did matters mend the next day, or the following ones, but rather grew worse and worse. The poor duckling was hunted down by everybody. Even his sisters were so unkind to him that they were continually saying: "I wish the cat would run away with you, you ugly creature!" While his mother added: "I wish you had never been born!" And the ducks pecked at him, the hens struck him, and the girl who fed the poultry used to kick him.

So he ran away, and flew over the palings. The little birds in the bushes were startled, and took wing. "That is because I am so ugly," thought the duckling, as he closed his eyes, though he ran on further till he came to a large marsh inhabited by wild ducks. Here he spent the whole night, and tired and sorrowful enough he was.

On the following morning, when the wild ducks rose and saw their new comrade, they said: "What sort of a creature are you?" Upon which the duckling greeted them all round as civilly as he knew how.

"You are remarkably ugly," observed the wild ducks; "but we don't care about



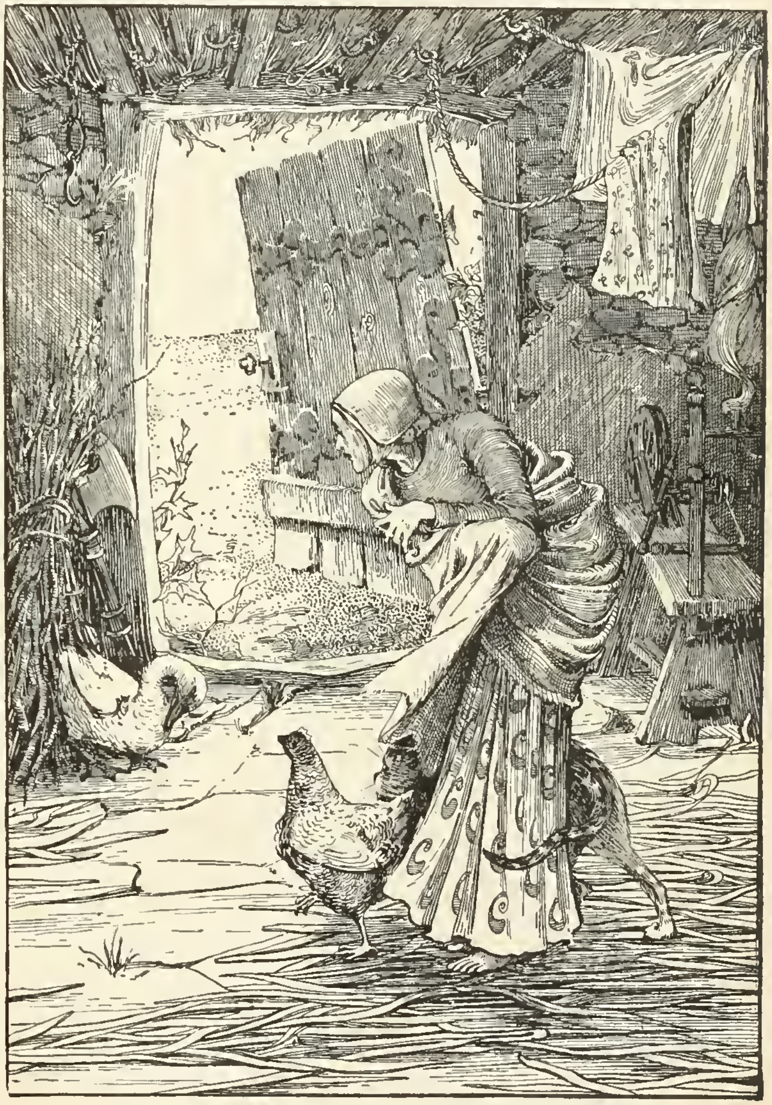
THE GIRL WHO FED THE POULTRY KICKED HIM.

that so long as you do not want to marry into our family." Poor, forlorn creature! He had truly no such thoughts in his head. All he wanted was to obtain leave to lie among the rushes, and drink a little of the marsh water.

He remained there for two whole days, at the end of which there came two wild geese, or, more properly speaking, goslings, who were only just out of the egg-shell, and consequently very pert.

"I say, friend," quoth they, "you are so ugly that we should have no objection to take you with us for a travelling companion. In the neigbouring marsh there dwell some sweetly pretty female geese, all of them unmarried, and who cackle most charmingly. Perhaps you may have a chance to pick up a wife amongst them, ugly as you are."

Pop! pop! sounded through the air, and the two wild goslings fell dead amongst the rushes, while the water turned as red as blood. Pop! pop! again echoed around, and whole flocks of wild geese flew up from the rushes. Again and again the same alarming noise was heard. It was a shooting party, and the sportsmen surrounded the whole marsh, while others had climbed into the branches of the trees that overshadowed the rushes. A blue mist rose in clouds and mingled with the green leaves, and sailed far away across the water; a pack of dogs next flounced into the marsh. Splash, splash, they went, while the reeds and rushes bent beneath them on all sides. What a fright they occasioned the poor duckling! He turned away his head to hide it under his wing, when, lo! a tremendous-looking dog, with his tongue lolling out, and his eyes glaring fearfully, stood right before him, opening his jaws and showing his sharp teeth, as though he would gobble up the poor little duckling at a mouthful; but splash, splash, on he went without touching him.

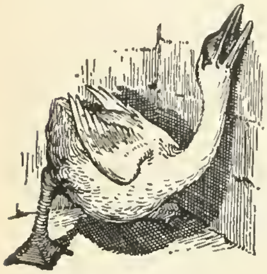

"WHAT'S THAT?" SAID THE WOMAN, LOOKING ROUND.

"Thank goodness!" sighed the duckling, "I am so ugly that even a dog won't bite me."

And he lay quite still, while the shot rattled through the rushes, and pop after pop echoed through the air.

It was not till late in the day that all became quiet, but the poor youngster did not yet venture to rise, but waited several hours before he looked about him, and then hastened out of the marsh as fast as he could go. He ran across fields and meadows, till there arose such a storm that he could scarcely get on at all.

Towards evening he reached a wretched little cottage, that was in such a tumble-down condition, that if it remained standing at all, it could only be from not yet having made up its mind on which side it should fall first. The tempest was now raging to such a height that the duckling was forced to sit down to stem the wind, when he perceived that the door hung so loosely on one of its hinges that he could slip into the room through the crack, which he accordingly did.



THE DUCKLING SAT IN A CORNER VERY MUCH OUT OF SPIRITS.

The inmates of the cottage were a woman, a tom-cat, and a hen. The tom-cat, whom she called her darling, could raise his back and purr; and he could even throw out sparks, provided he were stroked against the grain. The hen had small, short legs, for which reason she was called Henny Shortlegs; she laid good eggs, and her mistress loved her as if she had been her own child.

Next morning they perceived the little stranger, when the tom-cat began to purr, and the hen to cluck.

"What's that?" said the woman, looking round. Not seeing very distinctly, she mistook the duckling for a fat duck that had lost its way. "Why, this is quite a prize!" added she; "I can now get duck's eggs, unless, indeed, it be a male! We must wait a bit and see."

So the duckling was kept on trial for three weeks; but no eggs were forthcoming. The tom-cat and the hen were the master and mistress of the house, and always said: "We and the world"—for they fancied themselves to be the half, and by far the best half too, of the whole universe. The duckling thought there might be two opinions on this point; but the hen would not admit of any such doubts.

"Can you lay eggs?" asked she.

"No."

"Then have the goodness to hold your tongue."

And the tom-cat inquired: "Can you raise your back, or purr, or throw out sparks?"

"No."

"Then you have no business to have any opinion at all, when rational people are talking."

The duckling sat in a corner very much out of spirits, when in came the fresh air and the sunshine, which gave him such a strange longing to swim on the water, that he could not help saying so to the hen.

"What's this whim?" said she. "That comes of being idle. If you could either lay eggs or purr, you would not indulge in such fancies."

"But it is so delightful to swim about on the water!" observed the duckling, "and to feel it close over one's head when one dives down to the bottom."

"A great pleasure, indeed!" quoth the hen. "You must be crazy, surely! Only ask the cat—for he is the wisest creature I know—how he would like to swim on the water, or to dive under it. To say nothing of myself, just ask our old mistress, who is wiser than anybody in the world, whether she'd relish swimming and feeling the waters close above her head."

"You can't understand me!" said the duckling.

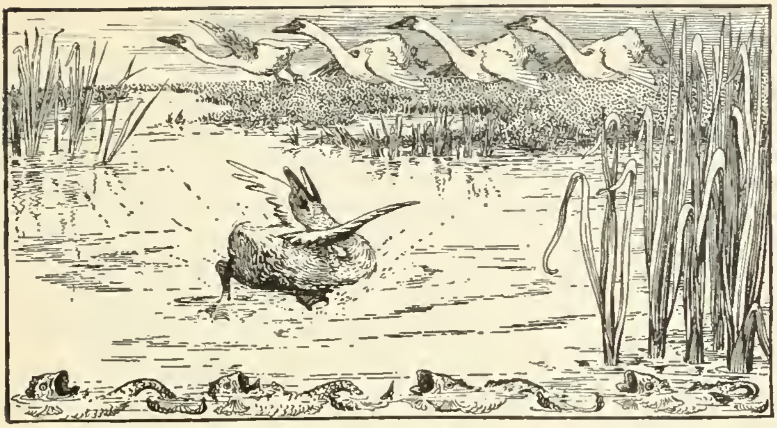
"We can't understand you? I should like to know who could. You don't suppose you are wiser than the tom-cat and our mistress—to say nothing of myself? Don't take these idle fancies into your head, child; but thank Heaven for all the kindness that has been shown you. Have you not found a warm room, and company that might improve you? But you are a mere chatterbox, and there's no pleasant intercourse to be had with you. And you may take my word for it, for I mean you well. I say disagreeable things, which is a mark of true friendship. Now, look to it, and mind that you either lay eggs or learn to purr and emit sparks."

"I think I'll take my chance, and go abroad into the wide world," said the duckling.

"Do," said the hen.

And the duckling went forth, and swam on the water, and dived beneath its surface; but he was slighted by all other animals, on account of his ugliness.

Autumn had now set in. The leaves of the forests had turned first yellow and then brown; and the wind caught them up and made them dance about. It began to be very cold in the higher regions of the air, and the clouds looked heavy with hail and flakes of snow; while the raven sat on a hedge, crying "Caw! caw!" from sheer cold; and one began to shiver if one merely thought about it. The poor duckling had a bad time of it! One evening, just as the sun was setting in all its glory, there came a whole flock of beautiful large birds from a large grove. The duckling had never seen any so lovely before. They were dazzlingly white, with long, graceful necks; they were swans. They uttered a peculiar cry, and then spread their magnificent wings,



HE TURNED ROUND AND ROUND IN THE WATER LIKE A WHEEL.

and away they flew from the cold country to warmer lands across the open sea. They rose so high—so high that the ugly duckling felt a strange sensation come over him. He turned round and round in the water like a wheel, stretched his neck up into the air towards them, and uttered so loud and strange a cry, that he was frightened at it himself. Oh! never could he again forget those beautiful, happy birds; and when they were quite out of sight, he dived down to the bottom of the water, and when he once more rose to the surface, he was half beside himself. He knew not how these birds were called, nor whither they were bound; but he felt an affection for them such as he had never yet experienced for any living creature. Nor did he even presume to envy them; for how could it ever have entered his head to wish himself endowed with their loveliness? He would have been glad enough if the ducks had merely suffered him to remain among them—poor ugly animal that he was!

And the winter proved so very, very cold! The duckling was obliged to keep swimming about, for fear the water should freeze entirely; but every night the hole in which he swam grew smaller and smaller. It now froze so hard that the surface of the ice cracked again; yet the duckling still paddled about, to prevent the hole from closing up. At last he was so exhausted that he lay insensible, and became ice-bound.

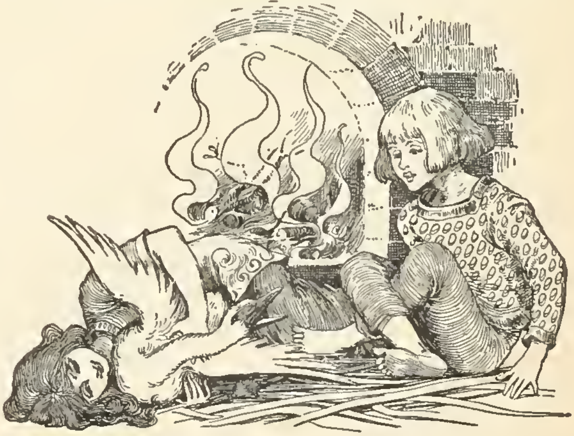
Early next morning a peasant came by, and, seeing what had happened, broke the ice to pieces with his wooden shoe, and carried the duckling home to his wife; so the little creature was revived once more.

The children wished to play with him; but the duckling thought they meant to hurt him, and in his fright he bounced right into a bowl of milk, that was spirted all over the room. The woman clapped her hands, which only frightened him still more, and drove him first into the butter-tub, then down into the meal-tub, and out again. What a scene then ensued! The woman screamed, and flung the tongs at him; the children tumbled over each other in their endeavours to catch the duckling, and laughed and shrieked. Luckily the door stood open, and he slipped through; and then over the faggots, into the newly-fallen snow, where he lay quite exhausted.

But it would be too painful to tell of all the privations and misery that the duckling endured during the hard winter. He was lying in a marsh, amongst the reeds, when the sun again began to shine. The larks were singing, and the spring had set in in all its beauty.

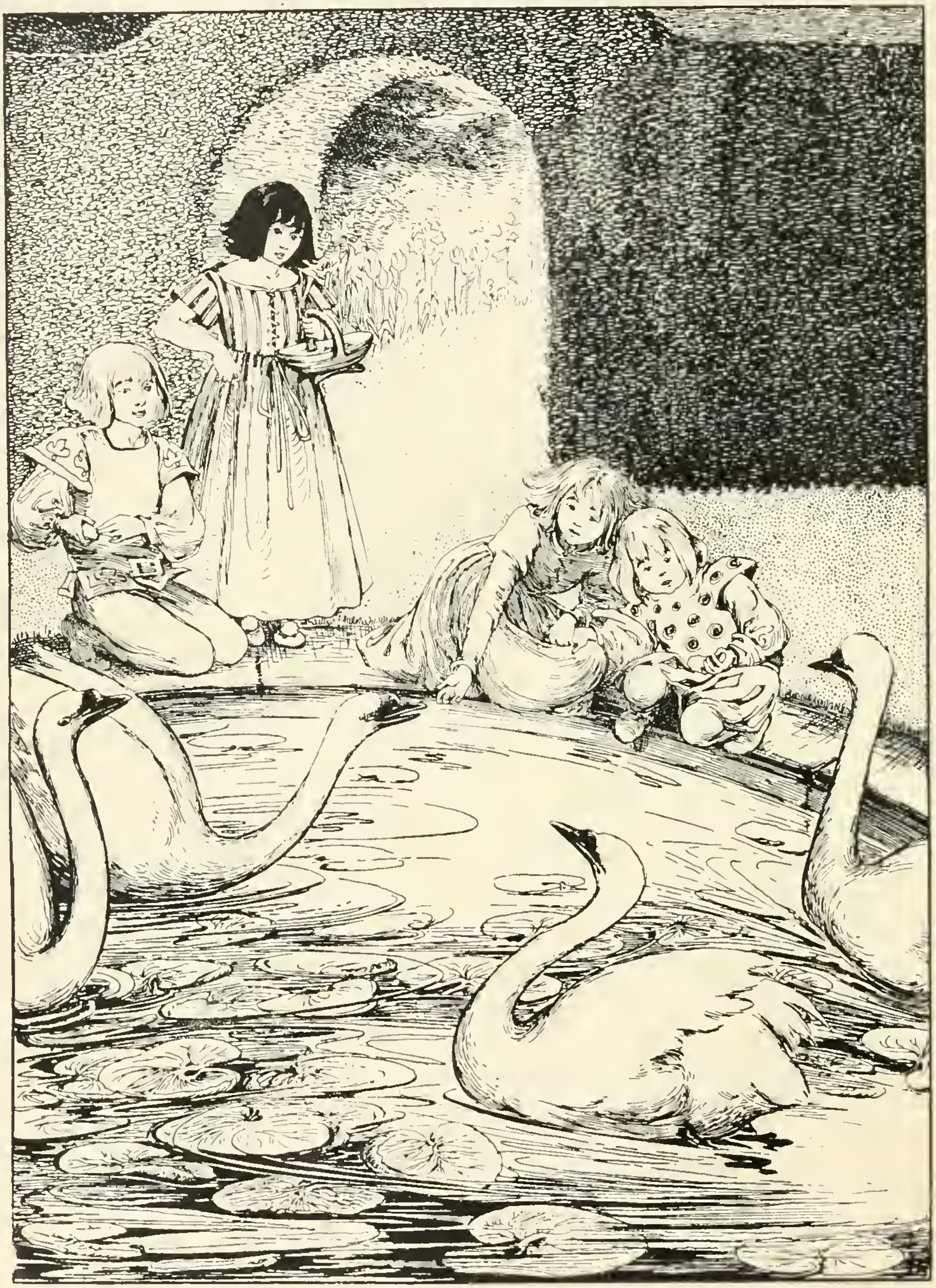
The duckling now felt able to flap his wings; they rustled much louder than before, and bore him away most sturdily; and, before he was well aware of it, he found himself in a large garden, where the apple-trees were in full blossom, and the fragrant elder was steeping its long, drooping branches in the waters of a winding canal. Oh, how beautiful everything looked in the first freshness of spring! Three magnificent white swans now emerged from the thicket before him; they flapped their wings, and then swam lightly on the surface of the water. The duckling recognised the beautiful creatures, and was impressed with feelings of melancholy peculiar to himself.

"I will fly towards those royal birds, and they will strike me dead for daring to approach



THE CHILDREN WOULD HAVE PLAYED WITH HIM.

them, so ugly as I am! But it matters not. Better to be killed by them than to be pecked at by the ducks, beaten by the hens, pushed about by the girl that feeds the poultry, and to suffer want in the winter." And he flew into the water, and swam towards these splendid swans, who rushed to meet him with rustling wings the moment they saw him. "Do but kill me!" said the poor animal, as he bent his head down to the surface of the water and awaited his doom. But what



SOME OF THE CHILDREN THREW BREAD-CRUMBS AND CORN INTO THE WATER.

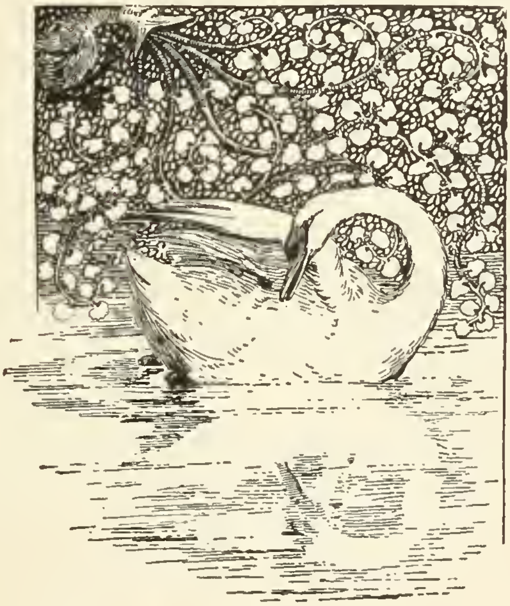
did he see in the clear stream? Why, his own image which was no longer that of a heavy-looking dark grey bird, ugly and ill-favoured, but of a beautiful swan!

It matters not being born in a duck-yard, when one is hatched from a swan's egg!

He now rejoiced over all the misery and the straits he had endured, as it made him feel the full depth of the happiness that awaited him. And the large swans swam round him, and stroked him with their beaks.

Some little children now came into the garden, and threw bread-crumbs and corn into the water; and the youngest cried: "There is a new one!" The other children were delighted, too, and repeated: "Yes, there is a new one just come!" And they clapped their hands and capered about, and then flew to their father and mother, and more bread and cake was flung into the water; and all said: "The new one is the prettiest. So young, and so lovely!" And the elder swans bowed before him.

He then felt quite ashamed, and hid his head under his wings. He did not himself know what to do. He was more than happy, yet none the prouder; for a good heart is never proud. He remembered how he had been pursued and made game of; and now he heard everybody say he was the most beautiful of all beautiful birds. Even the elder-bush bent its boughs down to him in the water; and the sun appeared so warm, and so mild! He then flapped his wings, and raised his slender neck, as he cried in the fulness of his heart: "I never dreamed of such happiness while I was an ugly duckling."

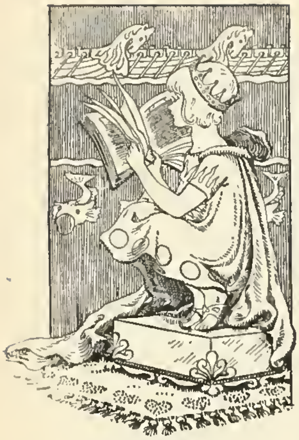


The Wild Swans

FAR away hence, in the land whither the swans fly when it is cold winter with us, there once lived a king who had eleven sons, and one daughter named Elise. The eleven brothers were princes, and used to go to school with a star on their breast and a sword at their side. They wrote on gold slates with diamond pencils, and learned by heart as easily as they could read; one could immediately perceive they were princes. Their sister Elise sat on a little glass stool, and had a book full of prints, that had cost nearly half the kingdom to purchase.

Oh, these children were happy indeed!—but, unfortunately, their happiness was not to last.

Their father, who was the king of the land, married a wicked queen, who was not well disposed



A BOOK FULL OF PRINTS.

towards the poor children. This they perceived from the very first day. There were festivities in the palace, and the children were playing at receiving visitors; but instead of their obtaining, as usual, all the cakes and roast apples that were to be had, she merely gave them some sand in a tea-cup, and told them they could make-believe with that.

In the following week, she sent their little sister Elise to a peasant's cottage in the country; and, before long, she spoke so ill of the poor princes to the king, that he no longer troubled himself about them.

"Fly out into the world, and pick up your own livelihood," said the wicked queen. "Fly in the shape of large birds without a voice." But she could not make things as bad as she wished, for they were turned into eleven beautiful wild swans; and away they flew out of the palace windows, uttering a peculiar cry as they swept over the park to the forest beyond.

It was still early as they passed by the peasant's cottage, where Elise lay asleep. They hovered over the roof, and extended their long necks, and flapped their wings, but nobody heard or saw them; so they were obliged to go on. And they rose up to the clouds, and flew out into the wide world, until they reached a large, gloomy forest, that shelved down to the sea-shore.

Poor little Elise was standing in a room in the cottage, playing with a green leaf, for she had no other toy. And she pierced a hole through the leaf, and looked up at the sun, when she fancied she saw her brothers' clear eyes; and every time the warm sunbeams fell on her cheeks, she used to think of their kisses.

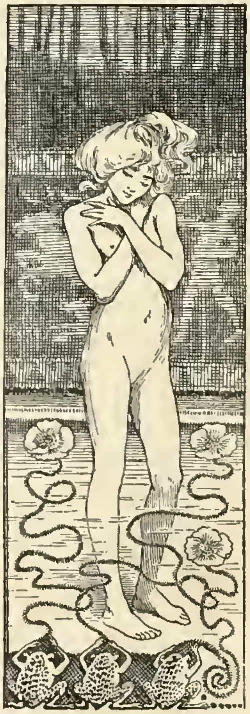
One day was just as monotonous as another. If the wind rustled through the large hedge of rose-bushes, he would whisper to the roses: "Who can be more beautiful than you?" But the roses would shake their heads, and answer: "Elise." And if the old woman sat before the door, on a Sunday, reading her psalm-book, the wind would turn over the leaves, and say to the book: "Who can be more pious than thou?" And then the psalm-book would answer: "Elise." And both the roses and the psalm-book spoke the pure truth.

When she was fifteen, she was to return home. But when the queen saw how beautiful she was, her heart was filled with hatred and spite. She would willingly have turned her into a wild swan, like her brothers, but she dared not do it just yet, because the king wished to see his daughter.

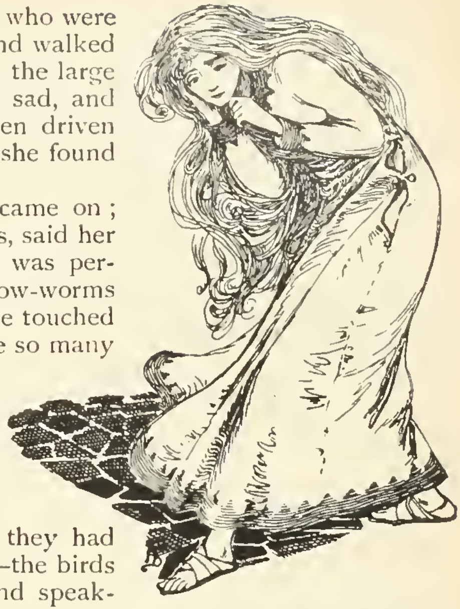
Early in the morning, the queen went into the bath-room, which was built of marble, and furnished with soft cushions, and the most beautiful carpet and hangings imaginable; and she took three toads and kissed them, and said to one of them: "Sit upon Elise's head when she comes into the bath, that she may become stupid like yourself. Sit upon her forehead," said she to another, "that she may grow as ugly as you, so that her father may not recognise her. Rest on her heart," whispered she to the third, "that she may have a bad disposition, which will breed her pain." She then put the toads into the transparent water, which turned green, and next called Elise, and helped her to undress and to get into the bath. And as Elise dipped her head under the water, one toad placed itself on her hair, another on her forehead, and a third on her breast. But she did not appear to observe them; and as soon as she rose up again, three poppies were floating on the water. If the animals had not been venemous, and had not been kissed by the witch, they would have been changed into red roses. But flowers they became, however, because they had rested on her head and her heart. She was too pious and too innocent for any witchcraft to have power over her.

When the wicked queen perceived this, she rubbed the princess with walnut-juice till she was quite brown, and besmeared her face with rancid ointment, and tangled her magnificent hair, till it was impossible to recognise the beautiful Elise.

When her father saw her he was quite frightened, and declared she was not his daughter. Nobody but the watch-dog and the swallows would recognise her—only they were poor animals, and could not speak a word.



HELPED HER TO UNDRESS AND GET INTO THE BATH.



STOLE OUT OF THE PALACE IN GREAT AFFLICTION.

Poor Elise then cried, and thought of her eleven brothers, who were all away. And she stole out of the palace in great affliction, and walked the whole day long across fields and marshes, till she reached the large forest. She knew not whither she was going, but she felt so sad, and she longed to see her brothers, who, she felt certain, had been driven out into the world like herself, and she determined to seek till she found them.

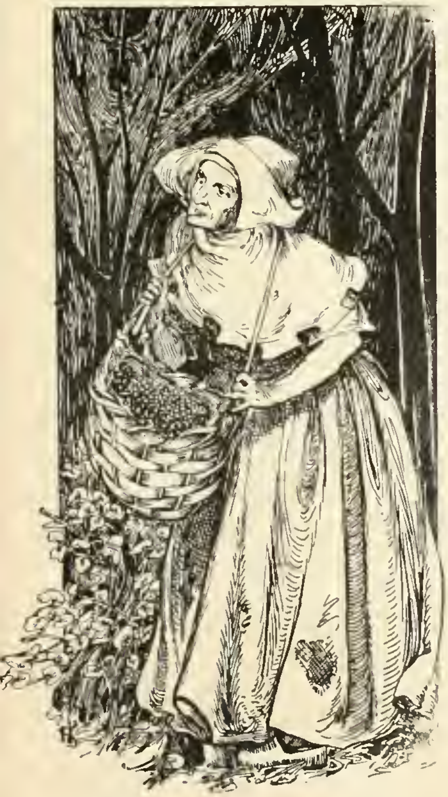
She had been but a short time in the wood when night came on; and having walked a long way, she lay down on the soft moss, said her prayers, and leaned her head against the stump of a tree. It was perfectly quiet all around, the air was mild, and hundreds of glow-worms lit up the surrounding grass and moss like green fire; and if she touched a twig ever so lightly, the brilliant insects showered down like so many falling stars.

All night she dreamed of her brothers. She thought they were playing together as in childhood, and were writing with the diamond pencils on the gold slates, and looking at the prints in the book that had cost half the kingdom. Only, instead of making sums on the slates, as heretofore, they wrote down the valiant deeds they had achieved, and all that they had done and seen; and in the print-book everything was living—the birds were singing, and the figures were walking out of the book, and speaking to Elise and her brothers. But the moment the latter turned over the leaves, they jumped back into their places, that no disorder might ensue.

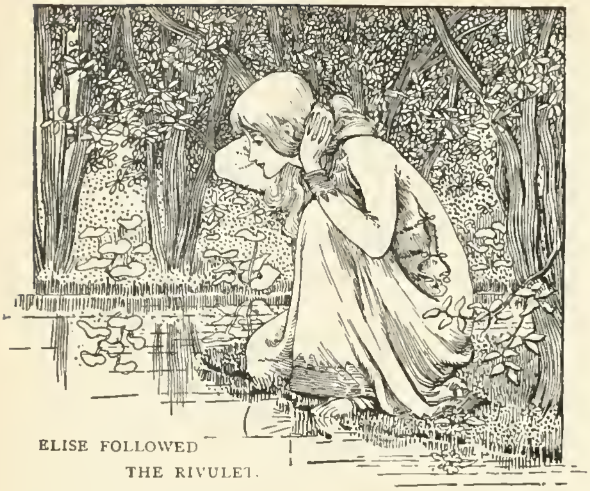
The sun was already high in the heavens when she woke. Not that she could see the sun, for the lofty trees were arching over her head, but its beams were playing here and there, like the fluttering of a gold gauze scarf; and there came a sweet fragrance from the woods, and the birds almost perched on her shoulders. She heard the rippling of water, which proceeded from several large streams that fell into a lake, that had a most beautiful sandy bed. Thick bushes grew round the lake, but the deer had made a large opening at one spot, through which Elise was enabled to reach the water. Its surface was so clear, that when the wind did not ruffle the branches and bushes, one might have fancied they had been painted on the bottom of the lake, so plainly was every leaf reflected, whether it stood in the sunshine or the shade.

As soon as Elise saw her own image, she was frightened at finding herself so brown and so ugly. But on wetting her little hand, and rubbing her eyes and forehead, her white skin was soon apparent once more. She then undressed, and got into the water, and a lovelier royal child than herself could not have been met with in the wide world.

When she had dressed herself again, and braided her long hair, she went to the running stream, and drank out of the hollow of her hand, and then she wandered deeper into the forest, without knowing what she meant to do. She thought of her brothers, and trusted that God would not abandon her. God has bidden the wild apples grow to feed the hungry, and He led her to one of these trees, whose boughs were bending beneath the weight of their fruit. Here she made her mid-day meal, and after propping up the branches, she went into the gloomiest depths of the forest. It was so quiet here that she could hear the sound of her own footsteps, and every little dried leaf that crackled under her feet. Not a bird was to be seen, nor did a sunbeam penetrate through the large dark branches. The lofty trunks stood so close to each other that when she looked before her it seemed as if she were shut in by a lattice



AN OLD WOMAN WITH A BASKET FULL OF CHERRIES.



ELISE FOLLOWED THE RIVULET.

made of huge beams of wood. It was solitude such as she had never known before.

The night was quite dark. Not a little glow-worm beamed from the moss. She lay down sorrowfully to compose herself to sleep. She then fancied that the boughs above her head moved aside, and that the Almighty looked down upon her with pitying eyes, while little angels hovered above His head and under His arms.

Next morning when she woke she could not tell whether this was a dream, or whether it had really taken place.

She then set out, but had not gone many steps when she met an old woman with a basket full of berries. The old woman gave her some to eat, and Elise asked her if she had not seen eleven princes riding through the forest.

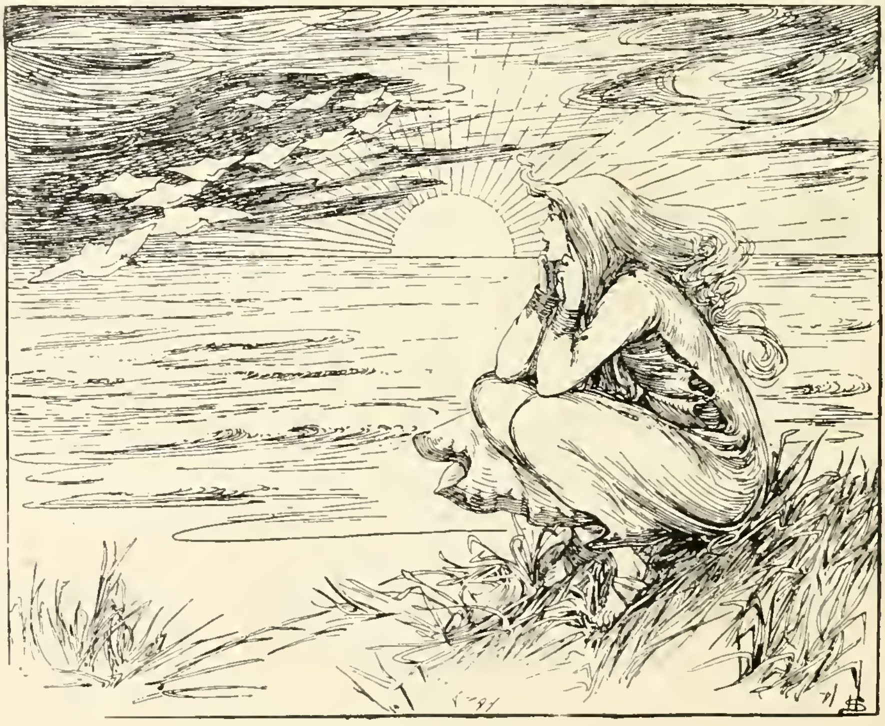
"No," said the old woman; "but yesterday I saw eleven swans, with gold crowns on their heads, swimming down the river hereabouts."

She then led Elise a little further, towards a slope, at the foot of which ran a winding rivulet. The trees on its banks stretched forth their long, leafy branches till they met, and wherever their growth would not have allowed them to mingle their foliage, the roots had broken loose from the soil, and hung entwined with the branches across the river.

Elise then bid the old dame farewell, and followed the rivulet till it flowed towards a wide, open shore.

The sea now lay before the young maiden in all its splendour, but not a sail was to be seen, and not as much as a boat could be descried. How was she to proceed further? She looked at the countless little pebbles on the shore, which the water had worn till they were quite smooth—glass, iron, stones, everything, in short, that lay there and had been washed by the waves, had assumed the shape of water, though it was softer still than her delicate hand. "It rolls along indefatigably, and wears away the hardest substances. I will be equally indefatigable. Thanks for the lesson you give me, ye clear, rolling waves! My heart tells me you will bear me to my dear brothers!"

In the moist seaweeds lay eleven white swan's feathers, which she gathered into a bunch. Drops of water trembled upon them; but whether they were dewdrops or tears, nobody could tell. It was lonely on that seashore, but she did not feel it to be so, for the sea was ever changing, and displayed



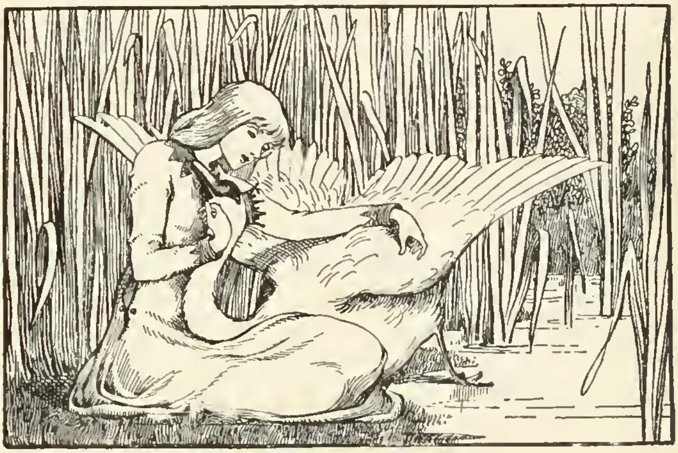
JUST AT SUNSET ELISE SAW ELEVEN WILD SWANS, WITH GOLDEN CROWNS ON THEIR HEADS, FLYING TOWARDS THE SHORE.

more variety in a few hours than the sweetest landscapes could show in a whole year. If a heavy black cloud arose, it seemed as if the sea meant to say: "I, too, know how to look dark"; and then the wind blew, and the waves turned their white side outwards. But if the clouds were rosy, then the winds slept, and the sea looked like a rose leaf—now white, now green. Yet, however calm it might be, there was always a slight motion near the shore, and the waters would heave slightly, like the breast of a slumbering infant.

Just at sunset Elise saw eleven wild swans, with gold crowns on their heads, flying towards the shore, one behind the other, like a long white ribbon. Elise then went up the slope, and hid herself behind a bush; the swans came down close to her, and flapped their large white wings.

The sun had no sooner sunk into the water than their swans' plumage fell off, and Elise's brothers stood there as eleven handsome princes. She uttered a loud scream; for, changed as they were, she knew and felt it must be they. She flung herself into their arms, calling them by their names; and the princes were quite happy on recognising their little sister, and finding how beautiful she had grown. They laughed and cried all in a breath, and they had soon related to each other how wicked their stepmother had been to them all.

"We brothers," said the eldest, "fly about, as wild swans, as long as the sun stands in the heavens; but no sooner has it sunk down than we recover our human shape. Therefore we must always provide a resting-place for our feet towards sunset; for were we flying in the clouds at this hour, we should fall into the sea on resuming our natural form. We do not live here. There lies across the sea a country as beautiful as this; but the way thither is long. We have to cross the wide sea, and there is not an island to be met with on the passage; only one solitary little rock lifts its head from the midst of the waters, and is barely large enough to afford us a resting-place by crowding closely together. If the sea is rough, the waves dash over us; still we thank God even for this barren crag, where we spend the night in our human shape, for without it we should never be able to visit our beloved country, since it requires two of the longest days in the year for our flight. It is only once a year that we have the privilege of visiting our home, and we have but eleven days to remain here and to fly over the forest, whence we can look upon the palace where we were born, and where our father lives, and at the church where our mother lies buried. We feel here as if the very trees and bushes were related to us; we see the wild horses careering over the steppes as we saw them in childhood; we hear the charcoal-burners singing the old songs to which we danced as children; it is, in short, the land of our birth, and hither do we feel ourselves irresistibly attracted; and here have we found you, our dear little sister. But we have only two days left to remain here, and then we must cross the sea to go to a beautiful country, which, however, is not our own. How shall we take you with us when we have neither ship nor boat?"


SHE STROKED HIS WINGS.

"How can I break your spell?" asked the sister.

And they talked nearly the whole night through, and only slept a very few hours.

Elise awoke on hearing the rustling of the swans' wings as they hovered over her, for her brothers were once more transformed. They described large circles, and at length flew quite away; but one of them, the youngest, remained behind. He nestled his head in her lap, and she stroked his wings, and they remained together the whole day. Towards evening the others returned; and when the sun had set they resumed their natural shape.

"To-morrow we must fly away," said one of them, "and may not return till the expiration of a whole year. Yet we cannot leave you thus. Have you the courage to accompany us? My arm is strong enough to carry you through the forest, and why should not the wings of us all suffice to bear you across the ocean?"

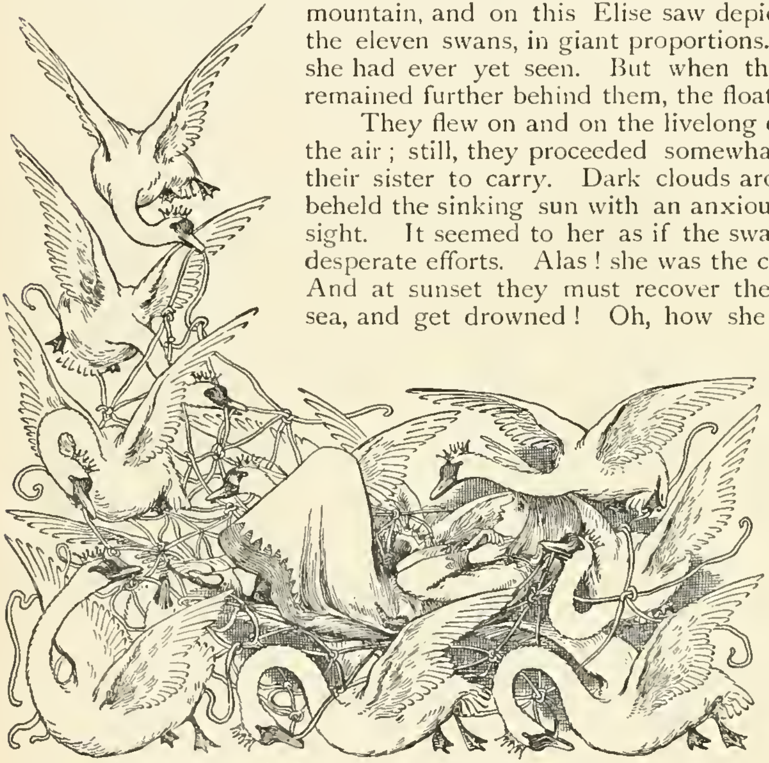
"Yes, do take me with you," said Elise.

They spent the whole night in making a net with the pliant bark of osiers and ropy sedges, and the net proved large and strong. Elise lay down upon it, and when the sun rose, and her brothers were changed to swans, they took up the net with their beaks, and flew up to the clouds with their beloved sister, who was still fast asleep. As the sunbeams fell right upon her countenance, one of the swans hovered over her head to shade her with his broad wings.

They were far from land when Elise woke. She thought she was still dreaming, so strange did it seem to her to be carried high up in the air over the wide sea. By her side lay a branch full of delicious ripe berries, and a bundle of savoury roots; these had been gathered by her youngest brother, and placed ready for her use. She smiled her thanks to him, for she recognised him in the swan who was hovering over her to shade her with his wings.

They were so high up in the air that the largest ship below them looked like a white sea-mew riding on the waves. A great cloud stood behind them like a vast mountain, and on this Elise saw depicted her own shadow and that of the eleven swans, in giant proportions. This was a prettier picture than she had ever yet seen. But when the sun rose higher, and the cloud remained further behind them, the floating vision vanished from her sight.

They flew on and on the livelong day, like an arrow hurtling through the air; still, they proceeded somewhat more slowly than usual, having their sister to carry. Dark clouds arose as evening came on, and Elise beheld the sinking sun with an anxious heart, for as yet no rock was in sight. It seemed to her as if the swans were flapping their wings with desperate efforts. Alas! she was the cause they could not advance faster. And at sunset they must recover their human shape, and fall into the sea, and get drowned! Oh, how she prayed for their safety from her inmost heart!—but still no rock appeared. The black cloud approached, violent gusts of wind told of a coming storm, while the clouds, gathered into one massive, threatening wave, seemed to move forward like lead. One flash of lightning followed upon another.


THE SWANS CARRIED ELISE AWAY FROM THE ROCK.

The sun had now reached the edge of the sea. Elise's heart beat fast, and the swans darted down so swiftly that she thought she must fall. But now again they soared in the air. The sun had dipped half into the water, when at length the little rock appeared below them. It did not look larger than a sea-dog's head peeping out of the waves. The sun sank so rapidly that it now only looked like a star; and at that moment their feet touched the solid ground. The sun went out like the last spark in a piece of burned paper, and the brothers now stood arm-in-arm round their sister; but there was not an inch more room than just sufficient for herself and them.

The waves lashed the rock, and a drizzling mist kept falling over them, while the sky was lighted up with continual flashes, and one clap of thunder followed close upon another; but the sister and her brothers sat holding each other's hands, and singing psalms, from which they derived both hope and courage.

Towards dawn the air was pure and still; and, the moment the sun had risen, the swans carried Elise away from the rock.

The sea was still rough, and, when seen from above, the white foam that crested the dark green waves looked like millions of swans swimming on the waters.

When the sun had risen higher, Elise saw before her, in the air, a mountain, with masses of glittering ice upon its crags, from the midst of which rose a castle at least a mile long, with colonnade upon colonnade piled boldly each on the top of the other. Forests of palm-trees were waving below, together with flowers as large as mill-wheels.

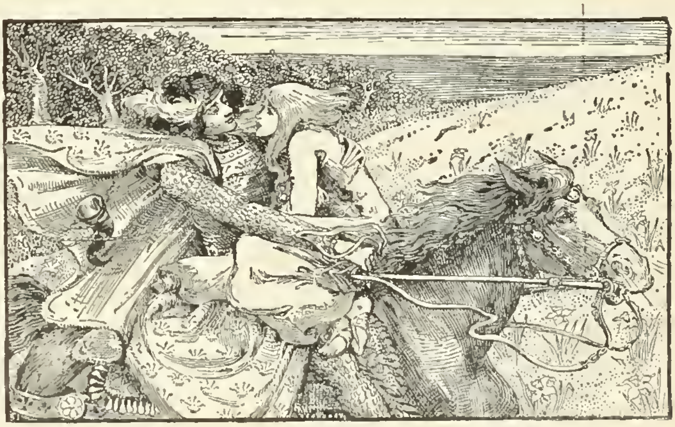
She inquired if that was the land whither they were bound? But the swans shook their heads; for what she saw was nothing but the fairy Morgiana's beautiful and ever-varying castle, built of clouds, and which no mortal could enter. Elise was still gazing at it, when down fell mountains, forests, and castle in one vast heap, and twenty stately churches, all alike, with high steeples and gothic windows, rose upon their ruins.

She thought she heard the organ pealing, but it was the roaring of the sea that deceived her.

As she approached the churches, these, in turn, changed to a large fleet that seemed to be sailing under her. On looking below, however, she perceived it to be mere clouds of mist that were gliding across the waters. She thus kept viewing an endless succession of sights, till at length she perceived the real land whither they were going, where stood the finest blue mountains, with cedar forests, towers, and castles. Long before sunset she sat on a rock, in front of a large cavern, that was overgrown with delicate green creepers, looking like an embroidered carpet.

"Now we shall see what you will dream about to-night," said the youngest brother, as he showed his sister her chamber.

"Heaven send that I may dream how to save you!" said she; and this notion busied her intently, and she prayed heartily to God to help her—so heartily, indeed, that she continued praying in her sleep. She then thought she was flying up through the air, to the fairy Morgiana's castle of clouds; and the fairy came forth to welcome her, in all her beauty and splendour, yet resembling withal the old woman who had given her the berries in the forest, and told her of the swans with gold crowns on their heads.



HELD HER BEFORE HIM ON HIS HORSE.

"Your brothers can be delivered," said she; "but have you sufficient courage and constancy to break the spell? Water is softer than your delicate hands, and yet it wears away stones; but it does not feel the pains your fingers will have to feel; and, having no heart, it cannot suffer the cares and anxiety that you will have to endure. Do you see this stinging-nettle that I hold in my hand? A number of the same sort grow round the cavern in which you are sleeping; and, mark me well, only those, and such as grow in churchyards, are available for the purpose in question. You must pluck them, although they will blister your hands. By treading upon them with your feet you will obtain flax, with which you must braid eleven coats of mail, with long sleeves, that will no sooner be thrown over the eleven swans than the spell will be broken. But remember that from the moment you begin this work until it be finished, though it should take you years to accomplish, you must not speak a word, or the first syllable you pronounce would strike a death dagger through your brothers' hearts. Their lives depend on your silence. Mark this well."

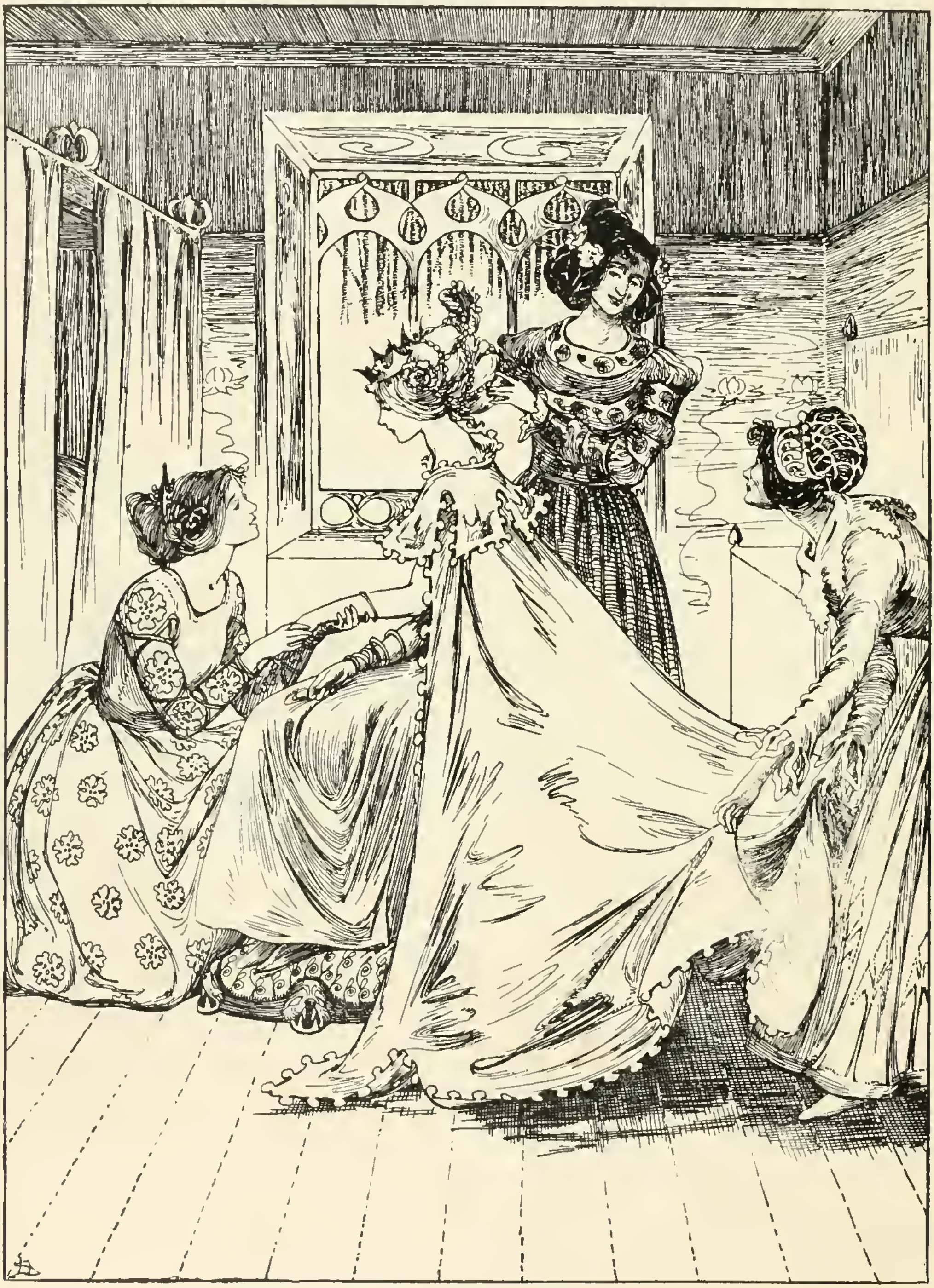
And at the same time she touched her hand with the nettle, which was like burning fire, and caused Elise to wake. It was broad day, and close beside her lay a nettle, like those she had seen in her dream. She then fell on her knees, and thanked God, and left the cave to begin her work.

Her delicate hands now plucked the ugly nettles that were like fire. Large blisters rose on her hands and arms; yet she suffered cheerfully, in the hopes of delivering her beloved brothers. She trod each nettle with her bare feet, and then began to braid the green flax.

When the sun had sunk, her brothers came home, and were frightened to find her dumb. They thought it some fresh spell contrived by their wicked stepmother. But, on seeing her hands, they understood what she was doing for their sakes; and the youngest brother wept, and wherever his tears fell on her hands the burning blisters disappeared.

She worked all night, for she could not rest till she had delivered her dear brothers. The swans were absent during the whole of the following day, and she sat alone, but never had the hours seemed to fly faster. One coat of mail was already finished, and she then began another.

A bugle-horn now echoed amongst the mountains, and made her start with fear. The sound approached, she heard the barking of dogs, and she flew back into the cave in great alarm ; and, tying up the nettles that she had gathered and dressed into a bundle, she sat upon it.



ALLOWED THE WOMEN TO DRESS HER IN REGAL ROBES.

At that moment a large dog jumped out from a narrow pass between the mountains, and was quickly followed by another, and another still ; they barked aloud, and ran back, and then returned again. In a few minutes all the huntsmen stood before the cave, and the handsomest among them was the king of the land. He stepped up to Elise, who was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

"How did you come hither, lovely maiden?" asked he.

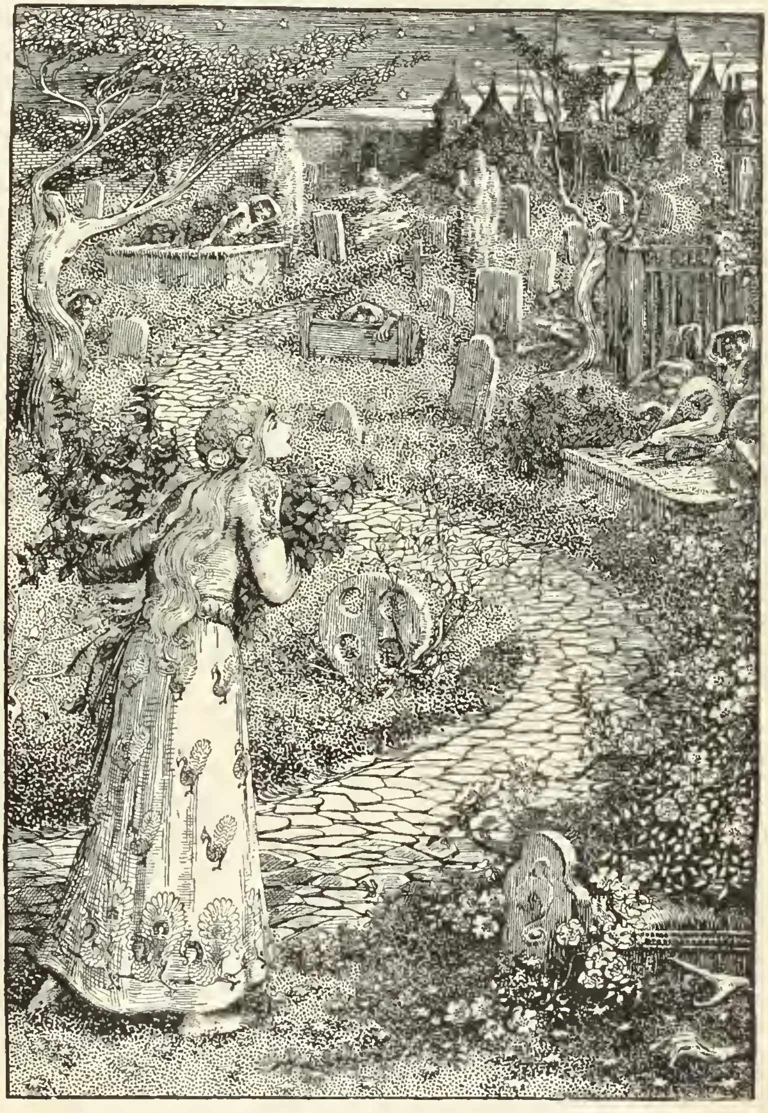
Elise shook her head. She dared not speak, for her brothers' delivery and lives were at stake: and she hid her hands under her apron, that the king might not see what she must be enduring.

"Come with me," said he; "you cannot remain here. If you are as good as you are beautiful, I will dress you in silk and velvet, and place my gold crown on your head, and you shall dwell in my richest palace. He then lifted her on to his horse. She wept, and wrung her hands, but the king said: "I do but wish for your happiness. Some day you will thank me for what I am doing."

And then he hunted through the mountains, and held her before him on his horse, and the huntsmen hunted behind them.

Towards sunset, the handsome capital, with its churches and cupolas, lay before them. And the king led her into the palace, where large fountains were playing in marble halls, whose walls and ceilings were adorned with paintings. But she had not the heart to look at these fine things; and kept weeping and mourning. However, she willingly allowed the women to dress her in regal robes, to braid her hair with pearls, and to put delicate gloves over her scorched fingers.

When she appeared in all her magnificence, she looked so dazzlingly beautiful, that the whole court bowed still more profoundly before her. And the king chose her for his bride, though the archbishop shook his head, and whispered that the pretty maid of the forest was in all likelihood a witch, who had fascinated the eyes and befooled the heart of their king.



UNTIL SHE REACHED THE CHURCHYARD.

But the king would not listen to him, and ordered the music to strike up, and the most costly dishes to be laid on the table, while the loveliest girls danced around her. And she was led through the fragrant garden to most magnificent rooms; but not a smile could be won from her lips, or made to sparkle in her eyes. She seemed the image of sorrow. The king then opened a little room, close to her sleeping chamber, that was provided with a costly green carpet, and was exactly like the cave she came from. On the floor lay the bundle of flax that she had spun out of the nettles, while the coat of mail, which she had finished, hung from the ceiling. All these things had been taken away by a huntsman who looked upon them as curiosities.

"You can fancy yourself in your early home," said the king. "Here is the work which busied you in the cave; and now, in the midst of all your magnificence, it may amuse you to look back at those days."

When Elise saw that which interested her so deeply, a smile played round her mouth, and the blood rushed back to her cheeks. She thought of her brothers' delivery, and kissed the king's hand, while he pressed her to his heart, and ordered all the bells to ring to announce their marriage. And the beautiful, dumb maid of the forest became the queen of the land.

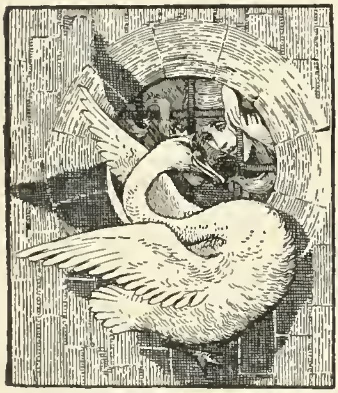
The archbishop whispered slanderous words into the king's ears, but they could not reach his heart. The wedding, he was determined should take place, and the archbishop himself was obliged to place the crown on the new queen's head, though he maliciously pressed down its narrow circlet on her forehead, so that it hurt her. But a heavier circlet bound her heart. and that was her sorrow for her brothers' fate. She did not heed her bodily sufferings. She remained mute, for a single word would have cost her brothers their lives; but her eyes expressed deep love for the kind, handsome king, who did everything to please her. Each day she loved him more and more. Oh, how it would have relieved her to have told him her sorrows, and to be able to complain! But dumb she must remain, and in silence must she finish her work. She therefore used to steal away from his side at night, and go into the little room that was decorated like the cave, and plaited one coat of mail after another.

On beginning the seventh, however, there was no flax left.

She knew that the nettles she required grew in the churchyard; only she must pluck them herself, and she knew not how she should manage to reach the spot.

"Oh! what is the pain in my fingers, compared to the anxiety my heart endures?" thought she. "I must attempt the adventure! The Lord will not withdraw His hand from me." And with as much fear and trembling as if she were about to commit a wicked action, did she steal down into the garden one moonlight night, and, crossing the long alleys, she threaded the lonely streets until she reached the churchyard. There she saw a circle of witches sitting on one of the broadest gravestones. These ugly witches took off their rags as if they were going to bathe, and then they dug up the fresh graves with their long, skinny fingers, and took out the dead bodies and devoured their flesh. Elise was obliged to pass by them, and they scowled upon her; but she prayed silently, and plucked the burning nettles, and carried them home.

One human being alone had seen her, and that was the archbishop. He was up while others were sleeping. Now he felt confirmed in his opinion that the queen was not what she ought to be, and that she was a witch, who had befooled the king and the whole nation by her arts.

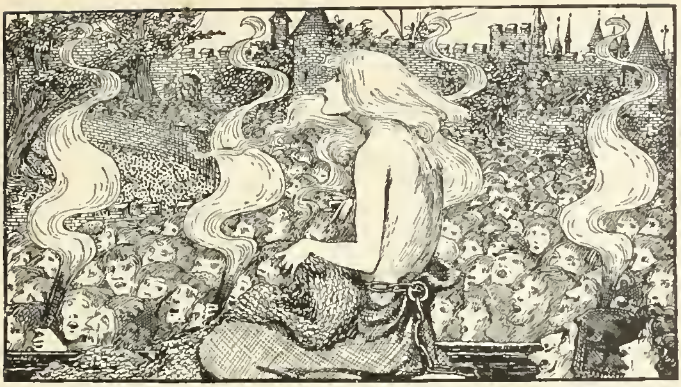


THE RUSTLING OF A SWAN'S WINGS SOUNDED NEAR THE GRATING.

He told the king, in the confessional, what he had seen and what he feared. And when harsh words came out of his mouth, the carved images of saints shook their heads, as much as to say, "It is not true! Elise is innocent!" But the archbishop interpreted their protestations quite differently; he pretended they bore witness against her, and that they shook their heads at her sins. Then a couple of bitter tears rolled down the king's cheeks. He went home, with a misgiving in his heart, and that night he pretended to go to sleep. But no sleep visited his eyes, and he perceived that Elise got up. Every night she did the same, and each time he followed her softly, and saw her disappear into the little room.

His brow grew darker day by day. Elise saw the change that had come over him, yet could not imagine the reason, though it made her uneasy—and besides this, how she suffered at heart on her brothers' account! Her warm tears bedewed the regal velvet and purple, and there they lay like glittering diamonds, and all who saw their splendour wished to be a queen. Meantime, she had nearly finished her work. Only one coat of mail was wanting; but she was short of flax, and had not a single nettle left. Once more—and this once only—would she have to go to the churchyard, and gather a few handfuls of nettles. She thought with horror of this lonely excursion, and of the frightful witches, but her will was as firm as her trust in the Lord.

Elise went, but the king and the archbishop followed her. They saw her disappear behind the grated door of the churchyard, and when they had nearly come up with her, the witches were sitting on the gravestone, as Elise had seen them, and the king turned away, for he fancied that she, whose head had been pillowed on his breast that very evening, was making one amongst those loathsome creatures.



TO SEE THE WITCH BURNT.

"The people must judge her," said he. And the people pronounced that she was to be burned as a witch.

She was now taken from the splendours of the royal palace to a dark, damp dungeon, where the wind whistled through a grating; and instead of silk and velvet they gave her the bunch of nettles which she had gathered — this was to serve as her pillow, while the hard, burning coats of mail that she had plaited were to be her coverlet. But nothing could have been more welcome to her—she resumed her work, and prayed to Heaven. The boys in the street sang lampoons upon her outside her prison, and not a soul comforted her with a kind word.

Towards evening the rustling of a swan's wings sounded near the grating. This was her youngest brother, who had discovered his sister's dungeon; and she sobbed for joy on seeing him, although she knew that the following night would, in all probability, be her last. But now her work was almost completed, and her brothers were there.

The archbishop came to spend the last hour with her, as he had promised the king he would do. But she shook her head, and begged him by looks and by signs to go away. For, unless she completed her work that night, her sufferings, her tears, and her sleepless nights would all prove vain. The archbishop left the prison, muttering calumnies against her, but poor Elise knew that she was innocent, and therefore she proceeded with her work.

The little mice ran about on the floor; they dragged the nettles to her feet, in order to help as well as they could; while a thrush sat near the grating of the window and sang most sweetly all night long, to keep up her spirits.

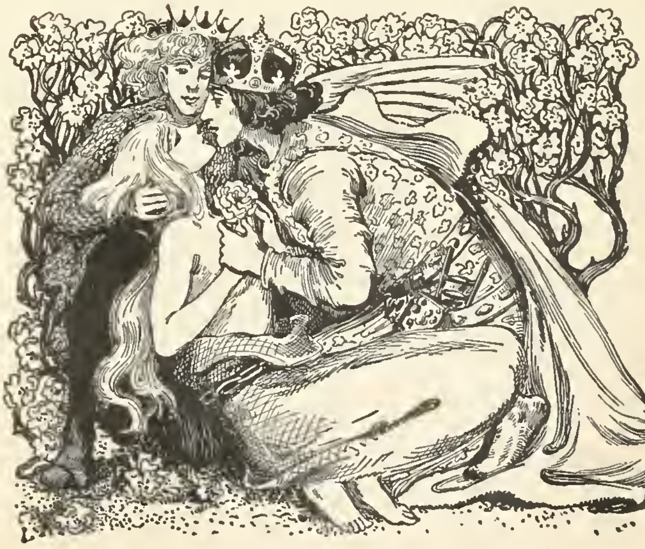
At early dawn, about an hour before sunrise, the eleven brothers presented themselves at the palace gate, and requested to be shown in to the king. But they were told it was impossible. It was still night, and the king was asleep and could not be woke. They implored, they threatened, the guard appeared, and at last the king himself came out to inquire what was the matter; but just then the sun rose, and no more princes were to be seen, and nothing but eleven swans flew over the palace.

The whole population flowed out through the gates of the town, to see the witch burnt. An old, sorry-looking hack drew the cart on which she sat; she was dressed in a sackcloth kirtle, and her beautiful hair was hanging loose on her shoulders; her cheeks were as pale as death, and her lips moved slightly, while her fingers continued braiding the green flax. Even on her way to death, she would not interrupt the work she had undertaken; the ten coats of mail lay at her feet, and she was finishing the eleventh. The people scoffed at her.

"Look how the witch is muttering! She has no psalm-book in her hand—no! she is busy with her hateful juggling—let's tear her work to pieces."

And they all rushed forward, and were going to tear the coats of mail, when eleven wild swans darted down, and placing themselves round her in the cart, flapped their large wings. The crowd now gave way in alarm.

"'Tis a sign from Heaven! She is surely innocent!" whispered the multitude;



THE KING PLUCKED IT, AND PLACED IT IN ELISE'S BOSOM.

but they did not dare to say so aloud. The executioner now took hold of her, but she hastily threw the eleven coats of mail over the swans, when eleven handsome princes instantly stood before her. Only the youngest had a swan's wing instead of an arm, because a sleeve was wanting to complete his coat of mail, for she had not been able to finish it.

"Now I may speak!" said she; "I am innocent!"

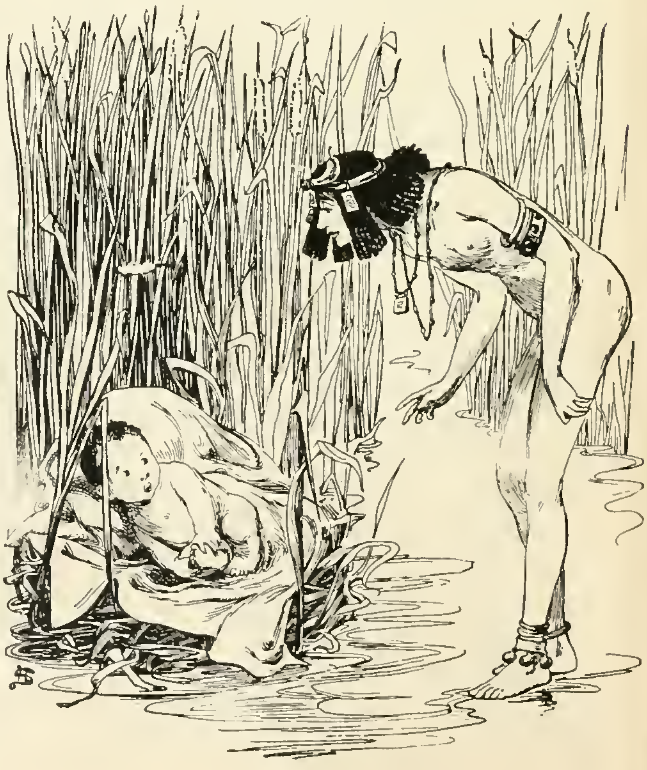
And the mob, on seeing what had taken place, now bowed before her as if she had been a saint; but she sank fainting into her brothers' arms, exhausted by the intense anxiety and grief she had suffered.

"Yes, she is innocent!" said the eldest brother, and he now related all that had happened. And, as he spoke, the air was filled with the perfume as of millions of roses—for every stick of firewood in the funeral pile had taken root and put forth twigs, and there stood a fragrant hedge, both tall and thick, full of red roses; and quite above bloomed a flower as white and brilliant as a star. The king plucked it, and placed it in Elise's bosom, and then she awoke, with a peaceful and happy heart.

And all the bells fell a-ringing of themselves, and birds flocked thither in long processions. And such a wedding party as returned to the palace, no king had ever seen before!

The Marsh King's Daughter

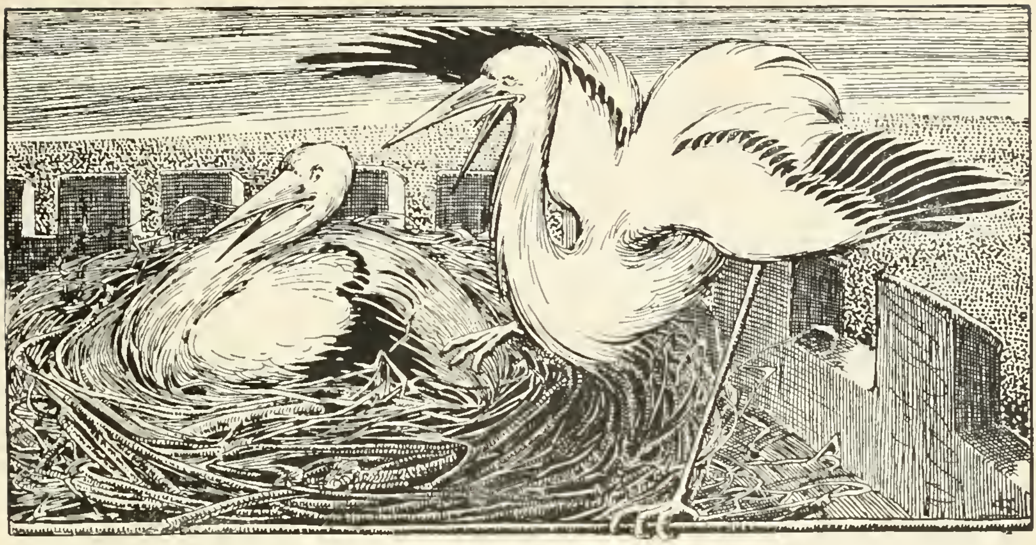
THE storks tell their young ones ever so many fairy tales, all of them from the fen and the moss. Generally the tales are suited to the youngsters' age and understanding. The baby birds are pleased if they are told just "kribly, krably, plurry-murry!" which they think wonderful; but the older ones will have something with more sense in it, or, at the least, a tale about themselves. Of the two oldest and longest tales which have been told among the storks, one we all know—that about Moses, who was placed by his mother in an ark on the waters of the Nile, was found by the king's daughter, and then was taught all learning, and became a great man, and no one knows where he was buried. Everybody has heard that tale.



WAS FOUND BY THE KING'S DAUGHTER.

But the other story is not known at all even now; perhaps because it is really a chimney-corner tale. It has been handed down by mother-stork to mother-stork for hundreds of years, and each in turn has told it better, till now we are telling it best of all.

The first pair of storks who knew it had their summer quarters on a Viking's loghouse by the moor in Wendsyssel, which is in the county of Hjörring, near Skagen in Jutland, if we want to be accurate. To this day there is still an enormous great moss there. You can read all about it in your geography book. The moss lies where was once the bottom of the sea, before the great upheaval of the land; and now it stretches for miles, surrounded on all sides by watery meadows and quivering bog, with turf-moss, cloudberries,



"DON'T GET EXCITED!

and stunted trees growing. A fog hangs over it almost continually, and till about seventy years ago wolves were still found there. It may certainly be called a wild moor, and you can imagine what lack of paths and what abundance of swamp and sea was there thousands of years ago. In that waste man saw ages back just what he sees to-day. The reeds were just as high, with the same kind of long leaves and purplish-brown, feathery flowers as they have now; the birches stood with white bark and fine, loose-hung leaves just as now they stand; and for the living creatures that came there, why, the fly wore its gauze suit of just the same cut as now, and the colour of the stork's dress was white and black, with red stockings. On the other hand, the men of that time wore different clothes from those we wear. But whoever it was, poor peasant or free hunter, that trod on the quagmire, it happened thousands of years ago just as it does to-day—in he went and down he sank, down to the Marsh King, as they called him, who reigned beneath in the great Moss Kingdom. He was called also the Mire King, but we will call him by the storks' name for him—Marsh King. People know very little about how he governed, but perhaps that is just as well.

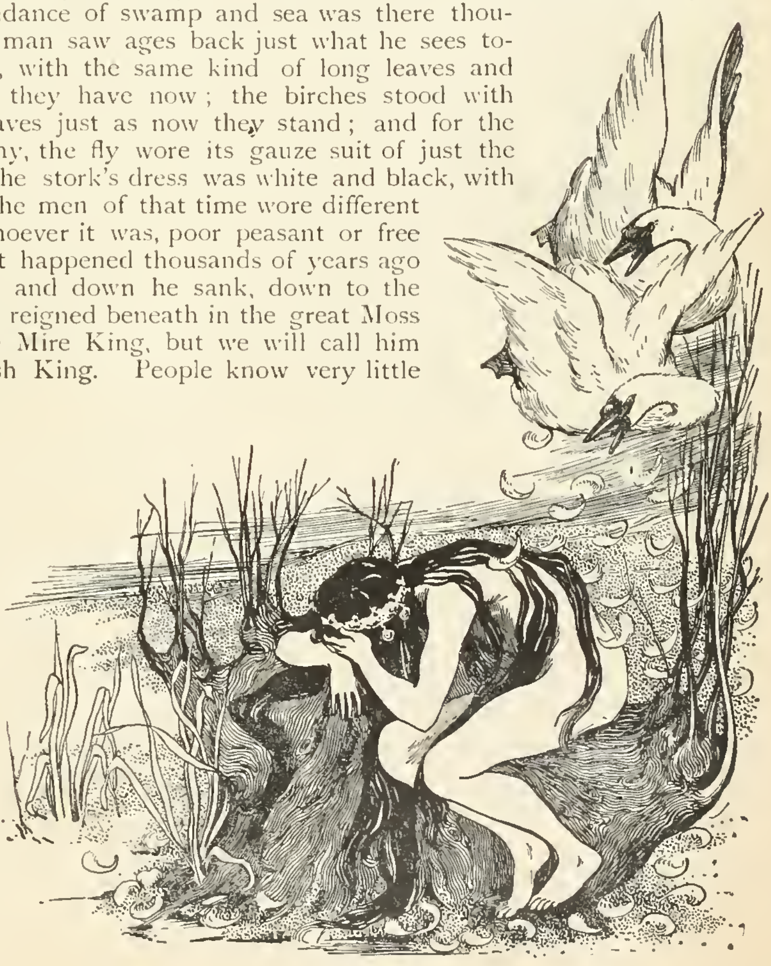
Near to the moss, and right in the Liim Fjord, stood the Viking's log-house, with paved cellar and tower two storeys high. On the roof the storks had built their nest. Mother-stork sat on her eggs, and was positive they would turn out well.

One evening father-stork had been out for a long time, and when he came home he seemed excited and flurried.

"I've dreadful news for you!" he said to mother-stork.

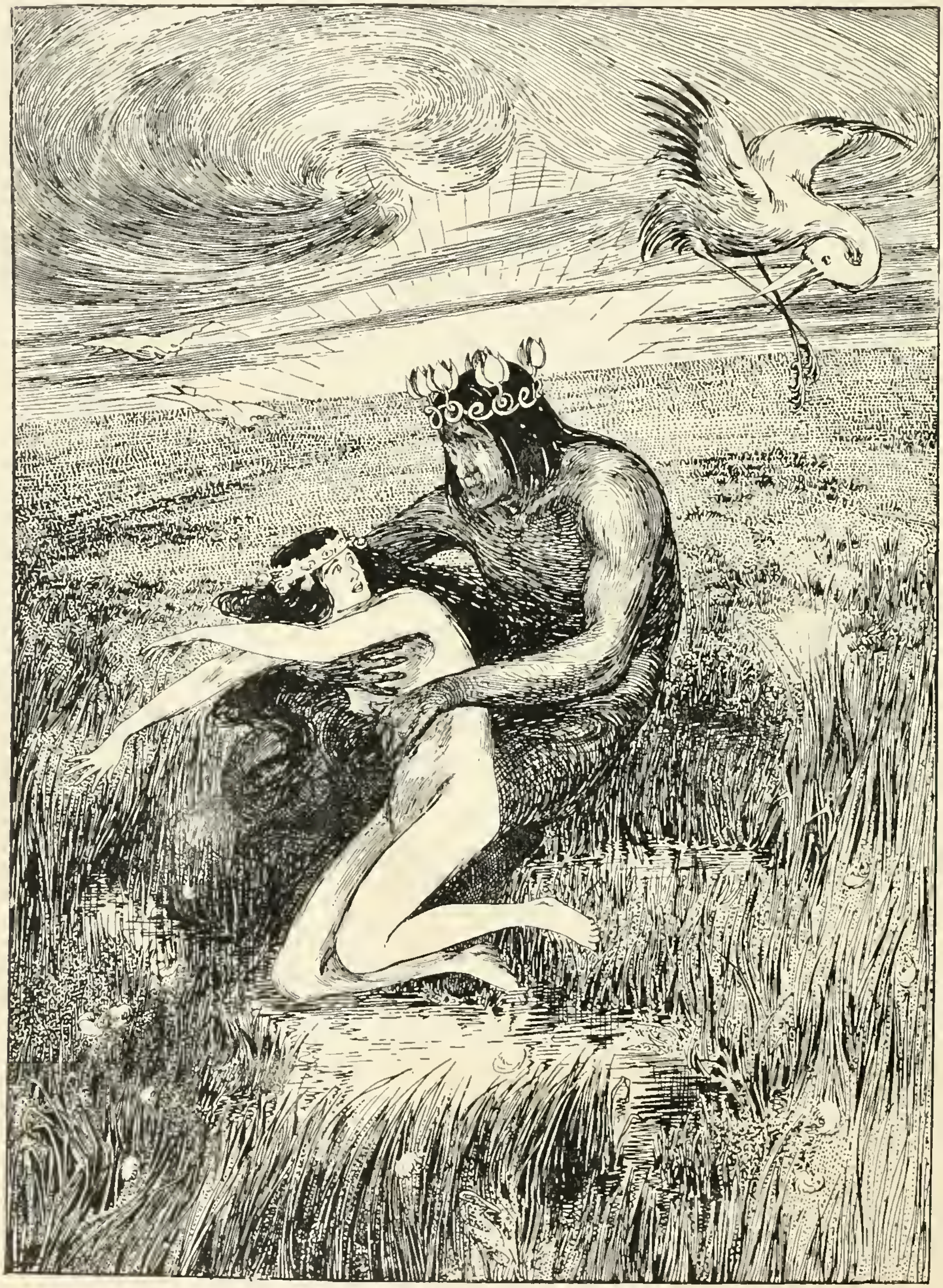
"Don't get excited," said she. "Remember I'm sitting on my eggs, and I might be upset by it, and then the eggs would suffer."

"You must know it!" he an-



TORE HER FEATHER DRESS INTO A HUNDRED PIECES.

swered. "She has come here, our landlord's daughter in Egypt! She has ventured on the journey here, and she is lost!"

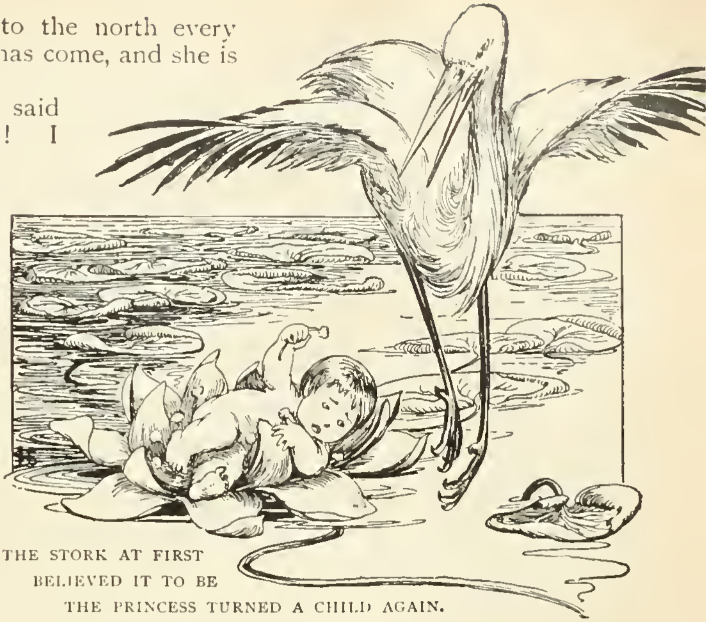


IT WAS HE WHO PULLED HER DOWN.

"Why, she is of fairy descent! Tell me all about it; you know I can't bear to wait at this time, when I'm sitting."

"Listen, mother. It's as you told me. She has believed what the doctor said, that the moor-flowers here could do her sick father good, and so she has flown here in a feather-dress with the other winged princesses, who have to come to the north every year to bathe and renew their youth. She has come, and she is lost!"

"You're getting too long-winded!" said mother-stork. "The eggs may be chilled! I can't bear to be excited!"



THE STORK AT FIRST BELIEVED IT TO BE THE PRINCESS TURNED A CHILD AGAIN.

"I have watched," said father-stork, "and in the evening, when I went into the reeds, where the quagmire is able to bear me, there came three swans. Something in the way they flew told me, 'Watch; that isn't a real swan; it's only swan feathers.' You know the feeling, mother, as well as I do; you can tell if it is right."

"Yes, certainly," said she; "but tell me about the princess. I'm tired of hearing about the swan's feathers."

"Here, in the middle of the moor, you know," said father-stork, "is a kind of lake; you can see a part of it if you stand up. There, by the reeds and the green quagmire, lies a great elder-stump. The three swans alighted on it, flapped their wings, and looked round them. Then one of them threw off her swan's plumage, and I saw it was our own princess, of our house in Egypt. Then she sat down, and she had no other covering than her own long, black hair. I heard her ask the two others to take great care of her swan-skin while she plunged under the water to gather a flower which she thought she saw. They nodded, and lifted up the loose feather-dress. 'I wonder what they mean to do with it,' said I to myself; and no doubt she asked them the same. And she got an answer, something she could see for herself. They flew aloft with her feather dress! 'Sink down,' they cried; 'you shall never fly in the swan-skin again; never see Egypt again! Stay in the moss!' And so they tore her feather-dress into a hundred pieces, till the feathers flew about as if it was snowing, and off flew the two good-for-nothing princesses."

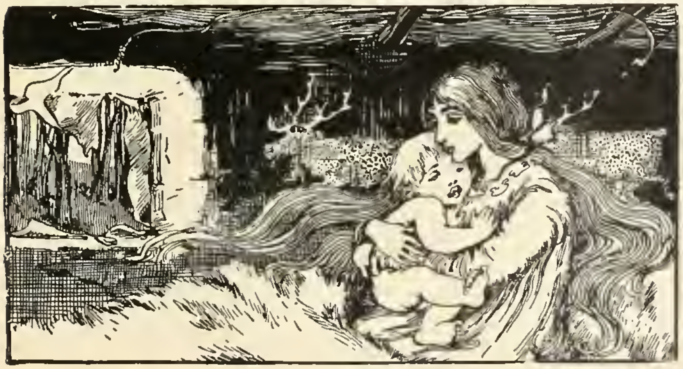
"Oh, how dreadful!" said mother-stork. "I can't bear to hear it. But, tell me, what else happened?"

"Our princess moaned and wept. Her tears fell on the elder-stump, and it was quite moved, for it was the Marsh King himself, who lives in the quagmire. I saw the stump turn itself, so it wasn't only a trunk, for it put out long, muddy boughs like arms. Then the unhappy girl was frightened, and sprang aside into the quivering marsh, which will not bear me, much less her. In at once she sank, and down with her went the elder-stump—it was he who pulled her down. Then a few big black bubbles, and no trace of her left. She is engulfed in the marsh, and will never return to Egypt with her flower. You couldn't have borne to see it, mother!"

"You shouldn't have told me anything of the sort just now; it may affect the eggs. The princess can take good care of herself. She'll get help easily enough. Had it been you or I, there would have been an end of us."

"However, I'll go day by day to see about it," said father-stork; and so he did.

The days and months went by. He saw at last one day that right from the bottom of the marsh a green stalk pushed up till it reached the surface of the water. Out of it grew a leaf, that grew wider and wider, and close to it a bud put out. Then one



SCREAMED PASSIONATELY, AND STRETCHED OUT ITS ARMS AND LEGS.

morning, as the stork was flying over it, it opened, with the sun's warmth, into a full-blown flower, in the middle of which lay a beautiful child, a little girl, as if she were fresh from the bath. So like was the child to the princess from Egypt, that at first the stork believed it to be herself turned a child again. But when he thought it over, he decided that it was more likely to be the child of the princess and the Marsh King, and that was why she was lying in a water-lily.

"She mustn't be left lying there," thought father-stork, "and there are too many already in my nest. But I have it! The Viking's wife has no children, and she has often wished for a little one. Yes, I get the name for bringing the babies; I will do it in sober truth for once! I'll fly to the Viking's wife with the child. They'll be delighted!"

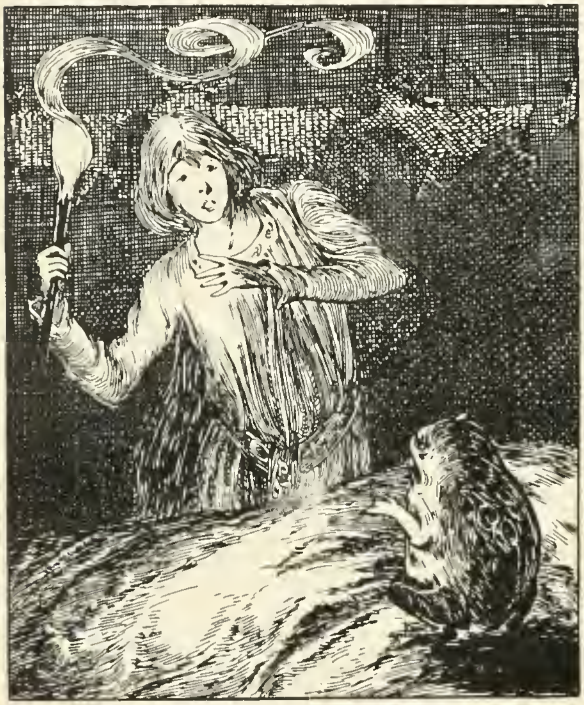
So the stork took the little girl, flew to the log-house, made a hole with his beak in the window, with panes made of bladder, laid the child on the bosom of the Viking's wife, and flew away to mother-stork to tell her all about it. Her young ones heard it too, for they were now old enough.

"Listen; the princess is not dead. She has sent her little one up, and the child has a home found for her."

"Yes, so I said from the first," said mother-stork. "Now think a little about your own children. It's almost time for our journey. I begin to feel a tingling under my wings. The cuckoo and the nightingale are off already, and I hear the quails chattering about it, and saying that we shall soon have a favourable wind. Our young ones are quite fit for training, I'm sure."

Glad indeed was the Viking's wife when she woke in the morning to find the beautiful little child near her side. She kissed and fondled it, but it screamed with passion, and threw out its arms and legs, and seemed utterly miserable. At last it cried itself to sleep, and there it lay, one of the prettiest babies you could set eyes on.

The Viking's wife was so happy, so gay, so well, that she could not but hope that her husband and his men would return as suddenly as the little one had come, and so she and all her household busied themselves to get everything into order. The long coloured tapestries, which she and her maidens had woven with figures of their gods — Odin, Thor, Freya, as they were called—were hung up; the slaves were set to polish the old shields used for decoration; cushions were arranged on the benches, and dry wood placed on the hearth in the middle of the hall, so that the fire could be lit in a moment. The Viking's wife took her share in the work, so that by the evening she was very tired, and slept soundly.

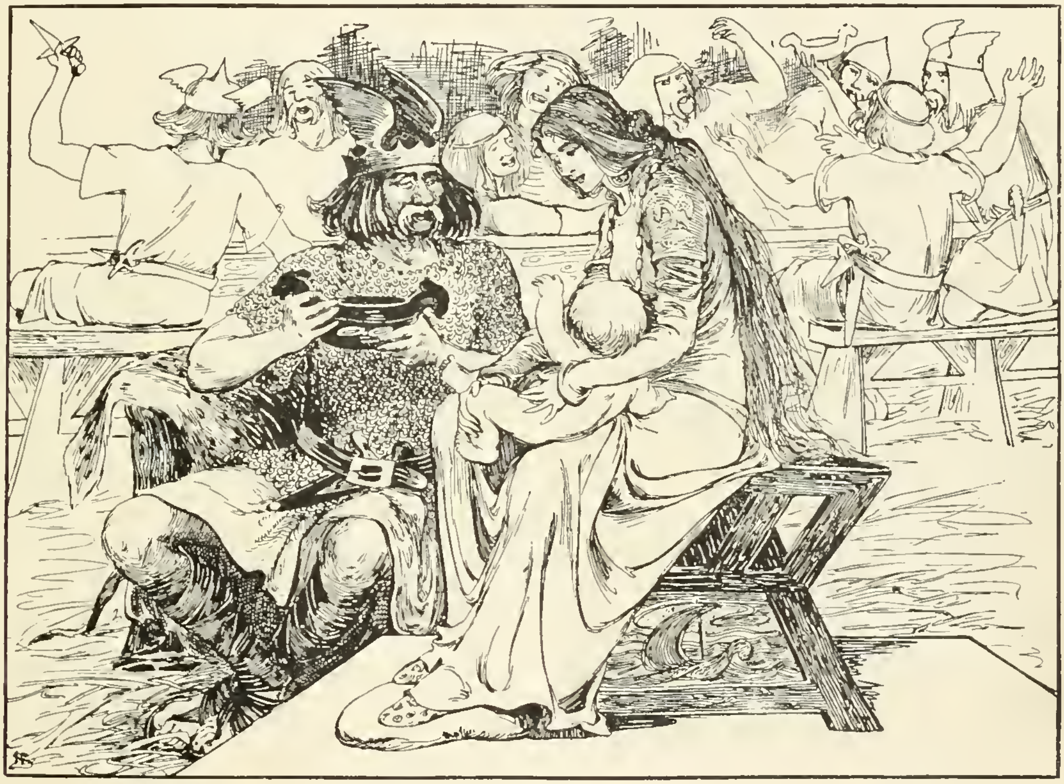

THERE, JUST AT THE FOOT OF THE BED, WAS A GREAT UGLY TOAD.

When she woke towards daybreak, she was terribly frightened. The little child had vanished! She sprang up, lighted a brand, and looked everywhere around. There, just at the foot of the bed where she had lain, was, not the baby, but a great ugly toad! In utter disgust at it she took a heavy stick to kill it, but the creature looked at her with such wonderfully sad eyes that she could not destroy it. Once more she gazed round; the toad uttered a faint, mournful croak. She started, and sprang from the bedside to the window, and opened it. At that moment the sun rose, and cast its rays upon the bed and upon the great toad. All at once it seemed that the creature's wide mouth shrank, and became small and rosy; the limbs filled out into the most charming shape. It was her own beautiful babe that lay there, not the hideous reptile!

"What is this?" cried the dame. "Was it an ill dream? Yes, there is my own sweet elfin child lying there!" She kissed it, and pressed it to her heart; but it fought and bit like a wild kitten!

The Viking, however, did not come that day, nor the next; for though he was on his way, the wind was against him as it blew to the south for the storks. Fair wind for one is foul for the other.

In those two days and nights the Viking's wife saw clearly how it was with her little child. And dreadful indeed was the spell that lay on it. By day it was as beautiful as an angel of light, but it had a bad, evil disposition. By night, on the other hand, it was a hideous toad, quiet, sad, with sorrowful eyes. It had two natures, which changed with its outward form. And so it was that the baby, brought by the stork, had by daylight its mother's own rightful shape, but its father's temper; while again, night made the kinship with him evident in the bodily form, in which, however, dwelt the mother's mind and heart. Who could loose the spell cast by the power of witchcraft? The Viking's wife was worn and distressed about it, and her heart was heavy for the unhappy being, of whose condition she did not think that she dared tell her husband if he came home then, for he would certainly follow the custom and practice of the time, and expose the poor child on the high road for any one that liked to take away. The good dame had not the heart to do this: her husband should see the child only by daylight.



THE VIKING'S WIFE SAT ON THE CROSS-BENCH IN THE OPEN BANQUETING HALL.

One morning the wings of storks were heard above the roof. More than a hundred pairs of the birds had rested themselves for the night after their heavy exercise, and they now flew up, preparatory to starting southwards.

"All ready, and the wives and children?" was their cry.

"Oh, I'm so light," said the young storks. "My bones feel all kribly-krably, as if I was filled with live frogs! How splendid it is to have to go abroad!"

"Keep up in the flight," said father and mother, "and don't chatter so much; it tires the chest."

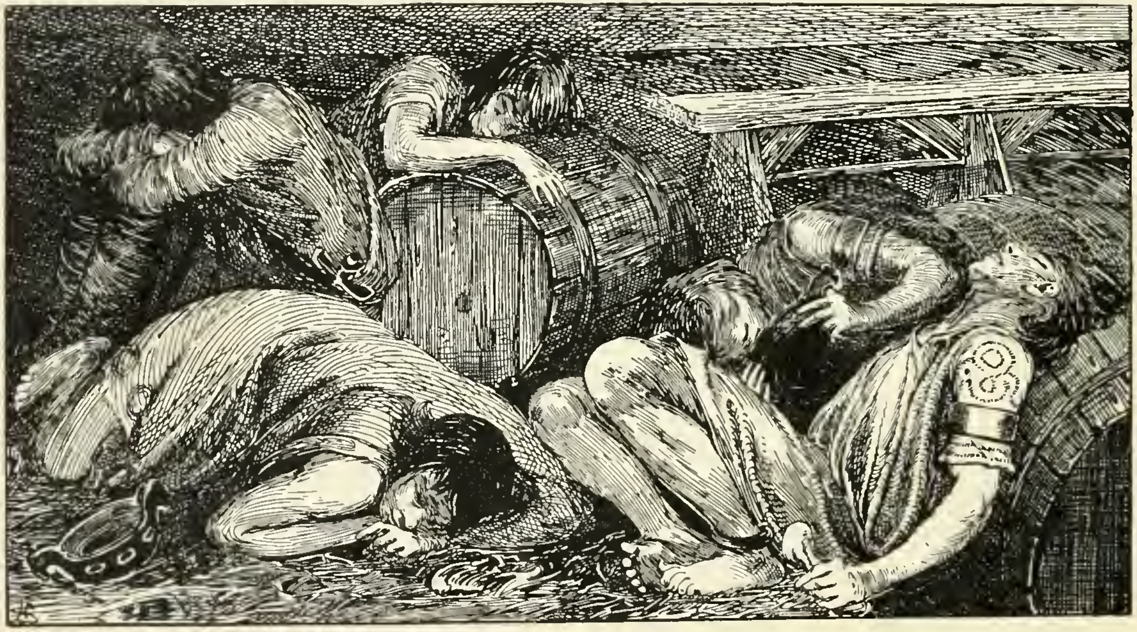
And they flew.

At the same moment a horn sounded over the moor. The Viking had landed with all his men, returning laden with booty from the coasts of Gaul, where the people, like those of Britain, used to chant in their terror: "From the rage of the Northmen, Lord, deliver us!" Guess what stir and festival now came to the Viking's stronghold near the moor! A barrel of mead was brought into hall; a huge fire was lighted; horses were slaughtered; everything went duly. The heathen priest sprinkled the slaves with warm blood, to begin their new life; the fire crackled; the smoke curled under the roof; the soot fell down from the beams—but they were used to that. Guests were invited, and received valuable gifts. Plots and treachery were forgotten; they drank deep, and threw the picked bones in each other's faces in good-humoured horse-play. The bard—a kind of musician, but a warrior as well, who went with them, saw their exploits, and sang about them—gave them a song in which they heard all their warrior-deeds and feats of prowess. Each verse ended with the refrain:

"Wealth, kindred, life cannot endure,
But the warrior's glory standeth sure."

And they all clashed upon their shields, and beat upon the table with knives and fists, and made great clamour.

The Viking's wife sat on the cross-bench in the open banqueting hall. She wore a robe of silk, with bracelets of gold and beads of amber. She had put on her dress of state, and the bard sang of her, and told of the golden treasure she had brought to her wealthy lord, while he was delighted with the beautiful child, for he could see it by day in all its loveliness. He was well pleased with the baby's wildness, and said she would become a right warrior-maid, and fight as his champion. She did not even blink her eyes when a skilful hand cut her eyelashes with a sharp sword as a rough joke.



THE SLAVES SLEPT FOR THE NIGHT IN THE WARM ASHES.

The barrel of mead was drained, and a second brought in, and all got well drunk, for they were folk who loved to drink their fill. They had a proverb: "The kine know when to go to stall from pasture, but the fool never knows when he has had enough." They knew it well enough, but know and do are different things. They had another proverb, too: "The dearest friend grows wearisome when he outstays his welcome." But on they stayed. Meat and mead are good: it was glorious!—and the slaves slept in the warm ashes, and dipped their fingers in the fat and licked them. Oh, it was a great time!

Once again that year the Viking went on a raid, though the autumn gales were rising. He led his men to the coast of Britain—"just over the water," he said; and his wife remained with the little girl. And truth to tell, the foster-mother soon grew fonder of the unhappy toad with the gentle eyes and deep sigh than of the beautiful child that fought and bit all about her.

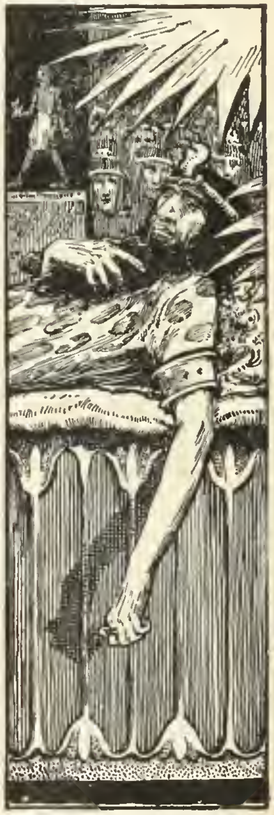
The raw, dank autumn mist, "Mouthless," which devours the leaves, lay over forest and moor; "Bird Featherless," as they called the snow, flew closely all around; winter was nigh at hand. The sparrows took the storks' nests for themselves, and criticised the ways of the late owners during their absence. And where were mother and father-stork and their young ones all the time? Down in the land of Egypt, where the sun shone warm, as it does on a fine summer's day with us. Tamarinds and acacias bloomed round them; the crescent of Mahomet gleamed bright from the cupolas of the mosques; pairs and pairs of storks sat on the slender turrets, and rested after their long journey. Great flocks of them had built nest by nest on the huge pillars and broken arches of temples and forgotten cities. The date-palm raised its foliage on high, as if to keep off the glare of the sun. Grey-white pyramids stood out against the clear sky across the desert, where the ostrich raced at speed, and the lion crouched with great, wise eyes, and saw the marble sphinx that lay half-buried in the sand. The Nile flood had retired; the whole bed of the river was swarming with frogs, and to the stork family that was quite the best thing to be seen in the country. The young ones thought their eyes must be playing them tricks, it all seemed so wonderful.

"We always have it just like this in our warm country," said mother-stork; and the young ones felt their appetites grow.

"Will there be anything more to see?" said they. "Shall we go much farther into the country?"

"There is nothing better to see," said mother-stork. "At that green border is only a wild wood, where the trees crowd one upon another, and are entangled together with thorny creepers. Only an elephant with his clumsy legs can make a way there. The snakes are too large for us, and the lizards too lively. If you try to go into the desert you get your eyes full of sand in fair weather, and if there is much wind, you find yourself buried under a sand-heap. No, this is the best place. Here are frogs and locusts. I shall stop here, and you must stay with me." And they stayed.

The old ones sat in their nest on the slender minaret and rested themselves, while yet they were busy preening their feathers and rubbing their beaks on their red-stockinged legs. They would raise their necks, bow gravely, and hold up their heads with their high foreheads, fine, smooth feathers, and brown eyes glancing sharply. The young hen-storks walked gravely about among the coarse reeds, stealing glances at the other young storks, and devouring a frog at every third step, or else a small snake, which they found so good for their health, and so tasty. The young males began to quarrel, beat each other with their wings, pecked, yes, stabbed till the blood flowed! And so one and another got betrothed, for that was the whole purpose of life. They built nests, and from that sprang new quarrels, for in hot countries tempers are so quick! Nevertheless, it was all delightful, especially to the old ones. Everything that one's own youngsters do becomes them. Every day there was sunshine; every day was so much taken up with eating that there was hardly time to think of amusement.


ALL HIS LIMBS RIGID AND STRETCHED OUT LIKE A MUMMY.

But inside the rich palace of their Egyptian landlord, as they called him, joy was unknown. Rich and mighty lord, there he lay on a couch, his limbs rigid, stretched out like a mummy, in the midst of the great hall with its many-coloured walls; it looked just as if he was lying in a tulip. His kinsmen and servants stood around him; he was not dead; you could not call him alive; he existed. The healing moss-flower from the northern land, which should have been searched for and gathered by her who loved him most dearly, would never be brought. His young and beautiful daughter, who flew in swan's-plumage over sea and land, far towards the north, would never return. "She is dead and gone!" the two swan-maidens had told him on their return. They had invented a whole history of it. Said they:—

"We all three flew high in the air: a hunter saw us and shot an arrow; it struck our friend, and singing her farewell, like a dying swan, she slowly sank, in the midst of a forest lake. There we buried her, near the shore of the lake, under a fragrant weeping-birch. But we took our revenge! We bound fire under the wings of a swallow which had built under the hunter's thatched roof! The thatch caught; the house blazed up! He was burned in it, and the light shone over the lake as far as the drooping birch tree under which she is buried. She will never come back to the land of Egypt."

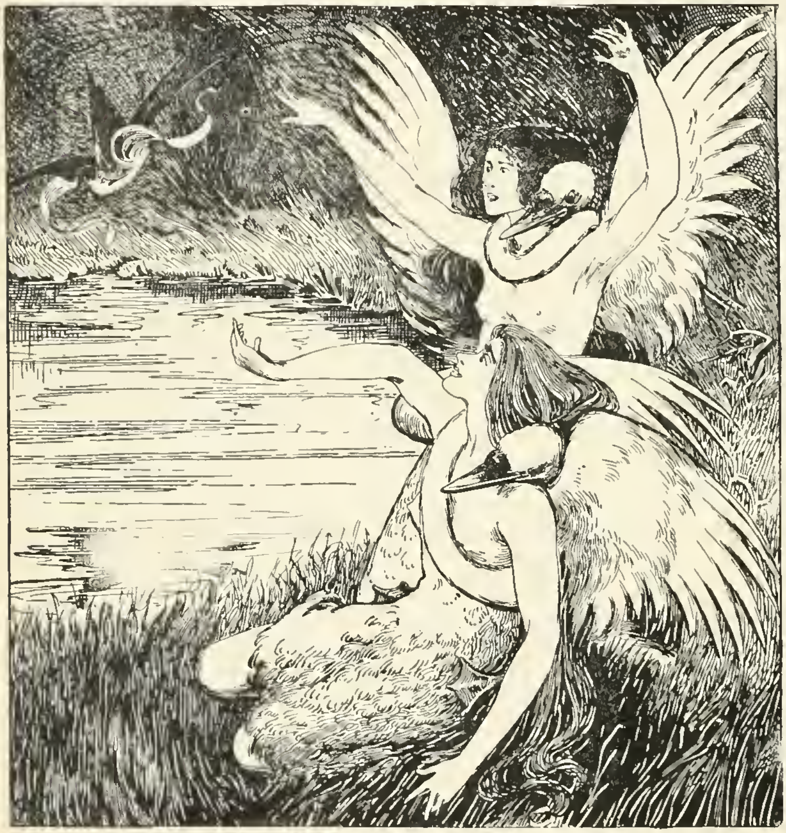
And so they both wept; and the father-stork, when he heard it, chattered with his beak till it rattled again.

"Lies and make-up!" said he. "I have a great mind to drive my beak into their hearts."

"And break it off!" said mother-stork. "And what good would that do? Think first of yourself and your own family; everything else is of no consequence!"

"However, I will seat myself on the edge of the open court in the morning, when all the learned doctors are met to talk about the illness. Perhaps they will come a little nearer the truth."

And the learned doctors came together, and talked and talked all about, so that the stork could not make head or tail of it—nor did anything come of it for the sickness, or for the daughter in the moor; but, nevertheless, we shall be glad to hear something about it, for we are obliged to listen to a great deal.



WE BOUND FIRE UNDER THE WINGS OF A SWALLOW.

But now it will be a very good thing to learn what had gone before this meeting, in order to understand the story better, for at least we know as much as father-stork.

"Love brings life! The highest love supports the highest life! Only through love will he be able to secure the preservation of his life!" was what they said; and very wisely and well said it was, according to the learned.

"That's a pretty thought!" said father-stork.

"I don't rightly understand it!" said mother-stork, "and it isn't my fault, but the expressions! However, be that as it may, I've something else to think about!"

Then the learned men had spoken of love for one thing to another, of the difference there is between the affection of lovers and that of parent and child; of the love of plant and sunbeam, where the rays of the sun touch the bud and the young shoot thus comes forth—all this was expounded at such great length and in so learned a way that it was impossible for father-stork to follow it, much less to repeat it. He was quite thoughtful about it, and half closed his eyes and stood on one leg a whole day afterwards; such learning was too heavy for him to bear.

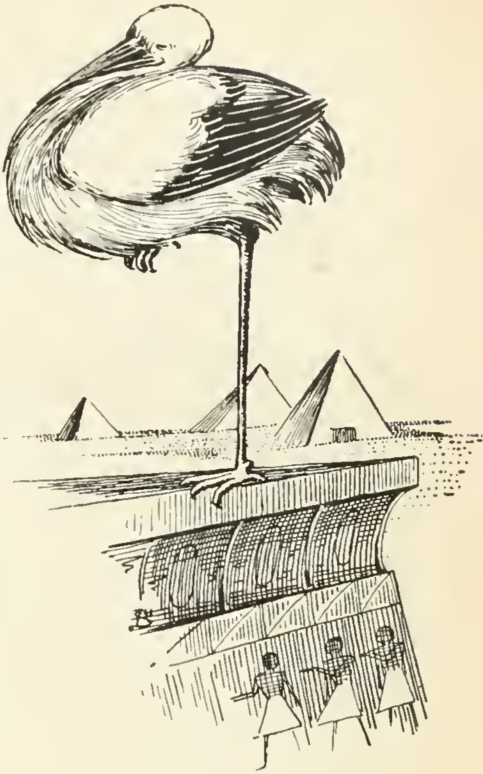
However, he understood one thing. He had heard both the common folk and those of the highest rank say the same thing from the bottom of their hearts—that it was a great misfortune for thousands of people, for the country at large, that this man should be ill and not recover; it would be a joy and blessing if he were restored to health. "But where does the flower of health grow for him?" that was what they had all inquired. They sought it from the scrolls of wisdom, from the twinkling stars, and from the winds; they had asked in all byways where they might find it, and at last the learned and wise announced, as we have said: "Love brings forth life, the life of a father," and so they said more than they themselves understood. They repeated it, and wrote it as a prescription: "Love brings forth life"; but how was the thing to be done from this prescription?

There lay the difficulty. At length they came to an agreement about it; the help must come from the princess, who was attached to her father with her whole soul and heart. And then they decided how it was to be brought about (all this was more than a year and a day before): she must go by night, at the new moon, to the marble sphinx near the desert, must clear away the sand from the door with her feet, and then go through the long passage that led into the middle of one of the great pyramids, where in his mummy-case lay one of the mighty kings of old, surrounded by splendour and magnificence. Here she was to hold her ear to the lips of the dead, and then it would be revealed to her how she was to gain life and health for her father.

All this she had done, and had learned in vision that, from the deep marsh in the land of Denmark, a spot most clearly indicated, she might bring home the marsh-flower, which there in the depth of the water had touched her breast. Then he would be healed. So she flew in swan's plumage from the land of Egypt to the moor.

You see, father-stork and mother-stork were aware of all this, and now we know the story more fully than before. We remember that the Marsh King dragged her down to him; we know that for those at home she is dead and gone; only the wisest of them all said still, with mother-stork: "She takes good care of herself!" and they were obliged to wait, for that was all they knew about it.

"I believe I can steal the swans' plumage from the two good-for-nothing princesses!" said father stork, "then they will not be able to go to the moor to work mischief. I will hide the swans' skins themselves till they are wanted."


HE STOOD ON ONE LEG.

"Where will you hide them?" asked mother stork.

"In our nest on the moor!" said he. "I and the youngest of our brood can be helped along with them, and if they are troublesome to us, there are plenty of places on the way where we can hide them till next time of moving. One swan's dress would be enough for her, but two are better; it is well to have plenty of luggage in a northern climate!"

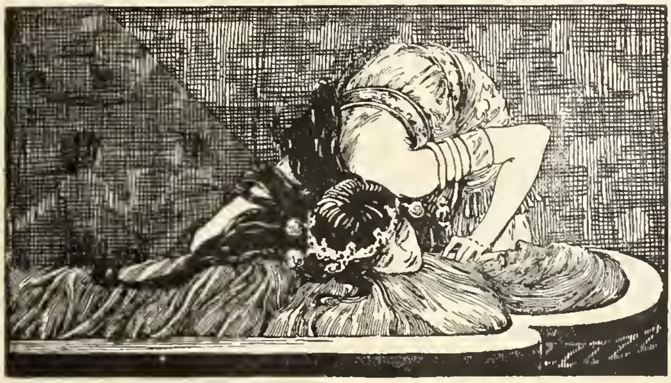
"You will get no thanks for it!" said mother-stork. "However, you are the master. I have nothing to say, except when I am sitting."

* * * * *

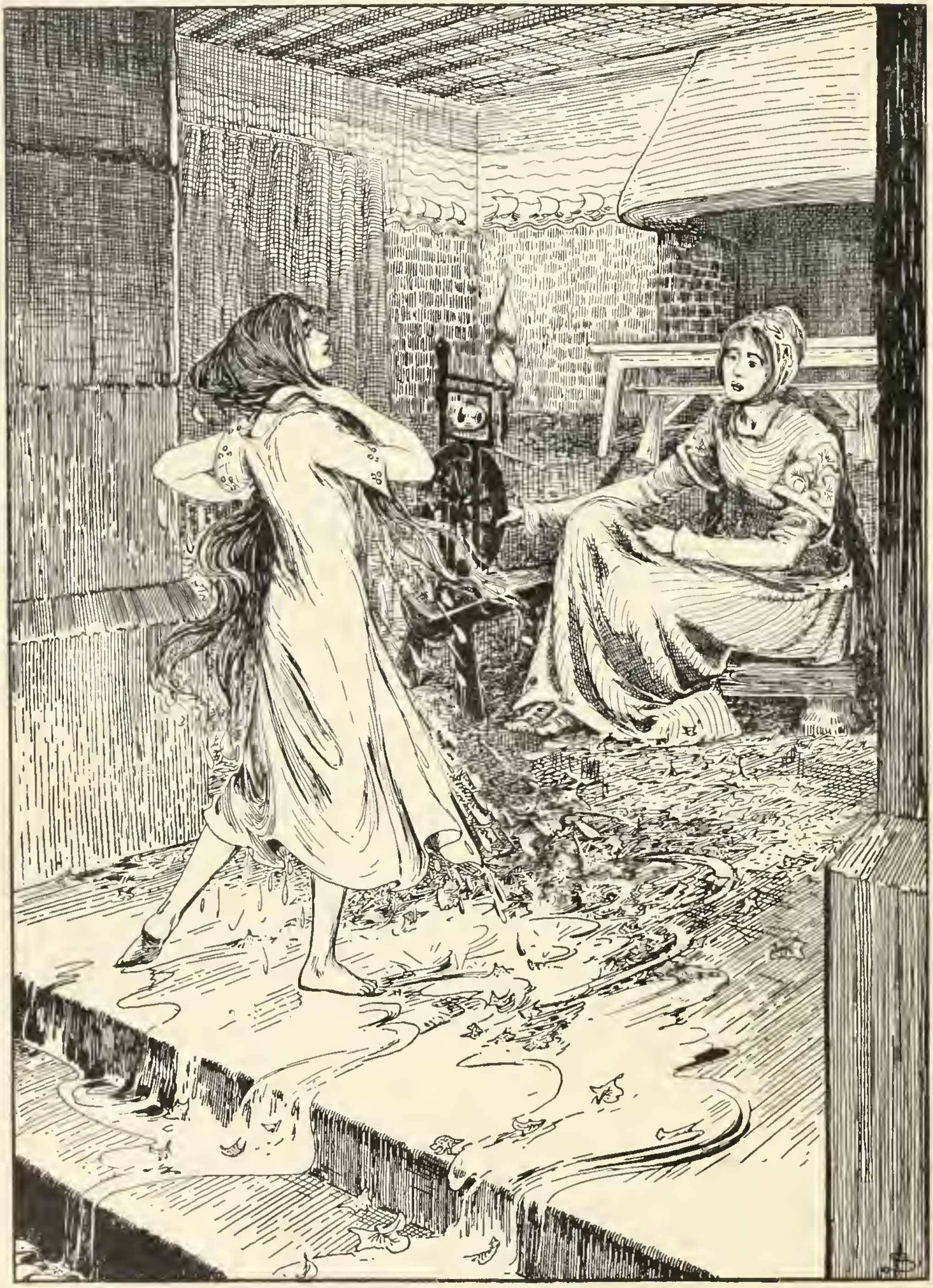
In the Viking's stronghold near the moor, whither the storks flew at the spring, the little girl had received her name. They had called her Helga, but that was far too sweet for such a disposition as the one possessed by this most beautiful child. Month after month it became more evident, and as years went by—whilst the storks pursued the same journey, in autumn towards the Nile, in spring towards the moor—the little child became a grown girl, and before people thought of it, she was in her sixteenth year, and the most beautiful of maidens. But the fruit was a beautiful shell, the kernel hard and rough. She was wilder than most people even in that hard, gloomy age.

It was a delight to her to splash with her white hands in the hot blood of the horse which had been slaughtered as a sacrifice; in her wildness she bit off the neck of the black cock which should have been slain by the heathen priest; and she said in sober earnest to her foster-father:—

"If thine enemy came and tied a rope to the beams of the roof, and lifted it over thy chamber, whilst thou wast


SHE WAS TO HOLD HER EAR TO THE LIPS OF THE DEAD.

asleep, I should not wake thee, even if I could! I would not hear it, my blood still so hums in my ears, where thou didst slap me years ago! Thou! I remember!"



CAME DRIPPING WITH WATER INTO THE LOFTY HALL.

But the Viking did not believe what she said; he was, like the others, infatuated with her beauty; and he did not know how disposition and appearance changed in little Helga. She would sit without a saddle, as if she had grown to the horse, when it galloped at full speed; and she would not leap off, even when it fought with other vicious horses. In all her clothes she would often cast herself from the bank into the strong current of the fjord and swim to meet the Viking when his boat was steering towards the land. She cut off the longest lock from her beautiful long hair, and made it into a string for her bow. "Self-made is well made!" she said.

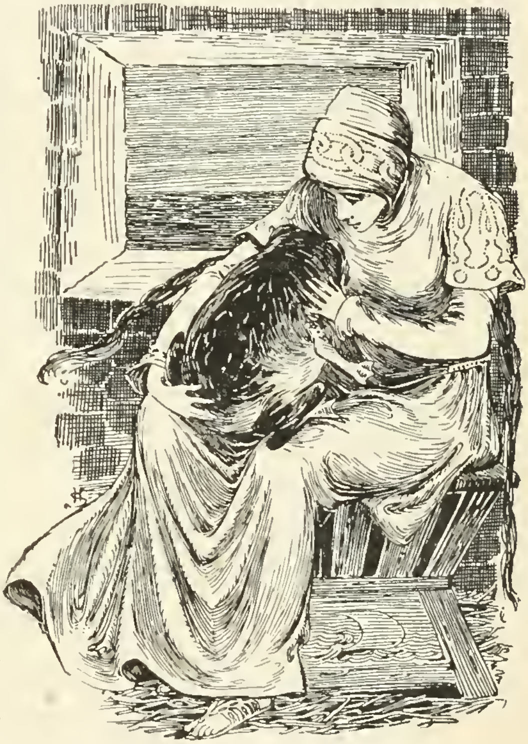
The Viking's wife, according to the age and custom, was strong in will and in disposition, but towards the daughter she seemed a mild, anxious woman, for she knew that the dreadful child was bewitched.

When her mother stood on the balcony, or walked out into the courtyard, it seemed as if Helga took an evil delight in placing herself on the edge of the well, extending her arms and legs, and then leaping plump into the narrow, deep hole, where she, with her frog-nature, dived, and rose again, crawled out, just as if she was a cat, and came, dripping with water, into the lofty hall, so that the green leaves which were scattered on the floor floated about in the watery stream.

But there was one bond that restrained little Helga, and that was the dusk of the evening. Then she became quiet and pensive, and would allow herself to be called and led. She seemed to be drawn by some internal feeling to her mother, and when the sun went down and the transformation without and within her took place, she sat there quiet and melancholy, shrunken together into the figure of a toad. Her body, indeed, was now far larger than that creature's, but it was only so much the more disgusting. She looked like a miserable dwarf with frog's head, and web between the fingers. There was something of the deepest melancholy in the expression of her eyes; she had no voice but a hollow moan, just like a child that sobs in its dreams. The Viking's wife could then take her on her knees; she forgot the ugly form, and looked only at the sorrowful eyes, and more than once she said:—

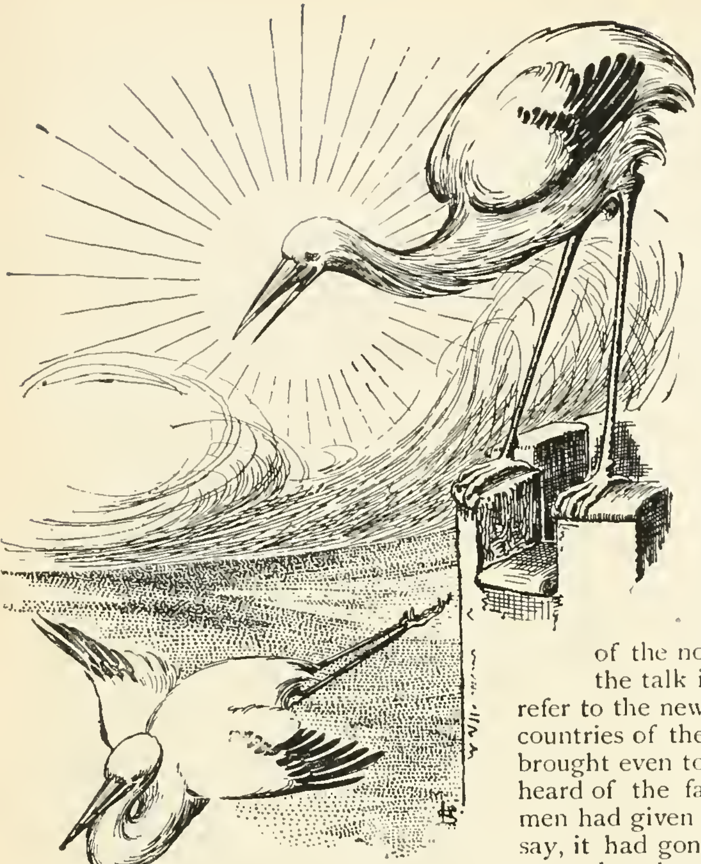
"I could wish almost that thou wast always my dumb frog-child! Thou art more frightful to look at when thy beauty returns to thee."

And she wrote runes against witchcraft and disease, and cast them over the wretched girl, but she saw no change.


THEN THE VIKING'S WIFE COULD TAKE HER ON HER KNEES.

"Now that she is a full-grown woman, and so like her Egyptian mother," said father-stork, "one could not believe that she was once so little that she lay in a water-lily. We have never seen her mother since! She did not take care of herself, as you and the learned men thought. Year out, year in, I have flown now in all directions over the moor, but she has never made any sign. Yes, let me tell you that every year when I have come up here some days ahead of you, to mend the nest and put one thing and another straight, I have flown for a whole night, like an owl or a bat, to and fro over the open water, but it was no use! Nor have the two swan-dresses been any use which the young ones and I dragged hither from the land of the Nile. Toilsome work it was, and it took us three journeys to do it. They have now lain for many years at the bottom of the nest, and if such a disaster as a fire should happen at any time, and the log-house be burnt, they would be lost!"

"And our good nest would be lost also!" said mother-stork. "You think too little of that, and too much of the feather-dress, and your moss-princess! You had better take it to her and stay in the bog! You are a useless father to your own family; I have said that ever since I sat on an egg for the first time! I only hope that we or our young ones may not get an arrow in the wing from that mad Viking girl! She does not know what she is doing. We have lived here a little longer than she, she should remember! We never forget our obligations; we pay our taxes yearly, a feather, an egg, and a young one, as is right. Do you think, when she is outside, I feel inclined to go down there, as in the old days, and as I do in Egypt, where I am half a companion with them, without their forgetting me, and peep into tub and pot? No, I sit up here worrying



"BUT HE IS STILL THE HANDSOMEST OF THEM ALL," SAID THE MOTHER STORK.

myself about her—the hussy!—and about you too! You ought to have let her lie in the water-lily, and there would have been an end of her!"

"You are kinder than your words!" said father-stork. "I know you better than you know yourself."

And so he gave a jump, two heavy strokes of his wings, stretched his legs behind him, and off he flew. He sailed away, without moving his wings. At a good distance off he gave a powerful stroke; the sun shone on his white feathers; he stretched his neck and head forward! That was speed and flight!

"But he is still the handsomest of them all!" said the mother-stork, "only I don't tell him that."

* * * * *

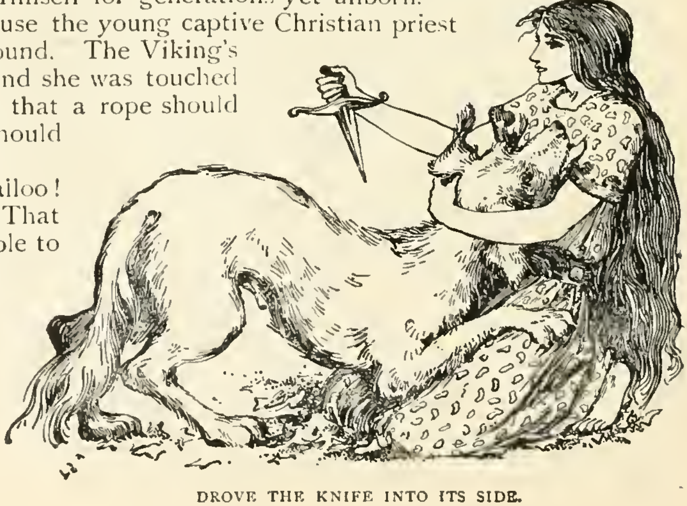
Early that autumn the Viking came home with spoil and captives. Among these was a young Christian priest, one of those men who preached against the idols of the northern countries. Often at that period did the talk in the hall and in the bower of the women refer to the new faith, which had made its way into all the countries of the south, and by the holy Anskarius had been brought even to Haddeby on the Schlei. Helga herself had heard of the faith in the White Christ, who out of love to men had given Himself to save them; but for her, as they say, it had gone in at one ear and out at the other. She seemed to have only a perception of that word "love" when she crouched in that closed room in her miserable frog-form. But the Viking's wife had listened to it, and felt herself wonderfully affected by the story and traditions of the Son of the only true God. The men, on coming home from their expedition, had told of the splendid temples of costly hewn stone, erected for Him whose message was love; and they brought home with them a pair of heavy golden vessels, elaborately pierced, and with a fragrant odour about them, for they were censers, which the Christian priests used to swing before the altar where no blood was ever shed, but wine and consecrated bread changed into His body and blood who had given Himself for generations yet unborn.

In the deep paved cellar of the log house the young captive Christian priest was confined, his feet and hands securely bound. The Viking's wife said that he was "as fair as Baldur," and she was touched by his distress; but young Helga wished that a rope should be drawn through his legs, and that he should be tied to the tails of wild oxen.

"Then I would set the dogs loose. Hailoo! away over bog and fen, out to the moor! That would be jolly to see! jollier still to be able to follow him on his course!"

But the Viking did not choose that he should be put to death that way, but, as a denier and opposer of the high gods, he should be offered the next morning on the blood-stone in the grove—the first time that a human sacrifice had been offered there.

Young Helga asked that she might



DROVE THE KNIFE INTO ITS SIDE.

sprinkle the images of the gods and the people with his blood. She sharpened her gleaming knife, and when one of the great, ferocious dogs, of which there were a good many in the court-yard, ran across her feet, she drove the knife into its side. "That is to test it," said she; and the Viking's wife looked sadly at the wild, ill-tempered girl, and, when the night came, and the beautiful bodily form of her daughter was changed for the beauty of soul, she spoke glowing words of sorrow to her from her own afflicted spirit.

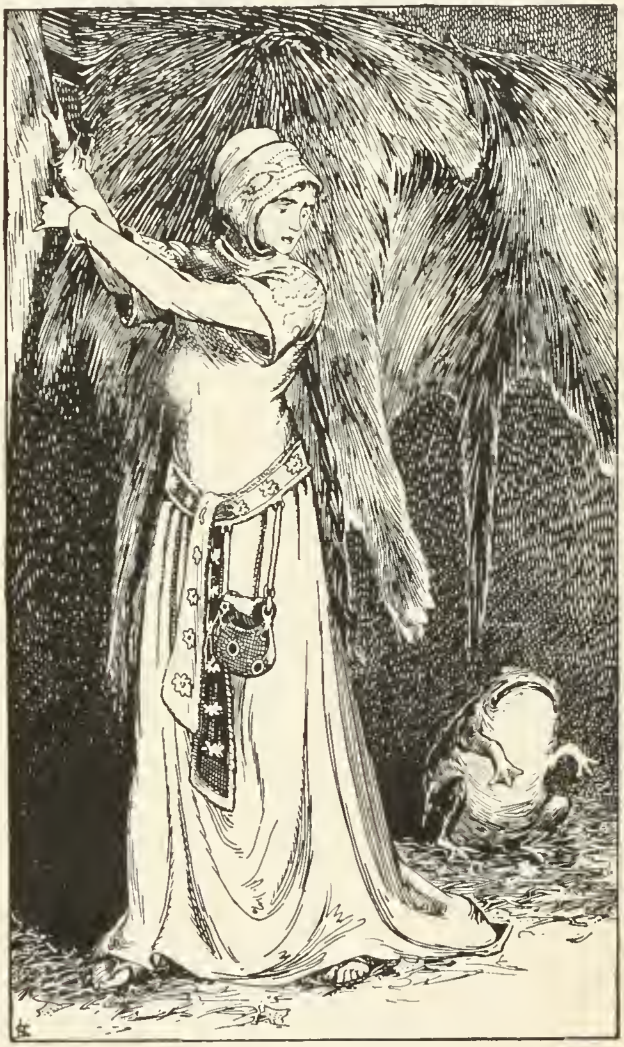
The hideous toad with the goblin's body stood before her, and fixed its brown, sorrowful eyes on her; listening and seeming to understand with the intelligence of a human being.

"Never, even to my husband, has a word fallen from my tongue about the two-fold nature I endure in thee," said the Viking's wife. "There is more pity in my heart for thee than I could have believed! Great is the love of a mother; but affection never comes into thy mind! Thy heart is like the cold clod! Whence didst thou then come into my house?"

At that the hideous form trembled and shook. It seemed as if the word touched some connection between body and soul; great tears came into its eyes.

"Thy bitter trial will come some time!" said the Viking's wife; "and terrible will it be for me! Better hadst thou been abandoned on the highway as a child, and the night-frost had lulled thee into death!" And the Viking's wife wept bitter tears, and, wrathful and sad, passed behind the loose curtains which hung over the beam and divided the room.

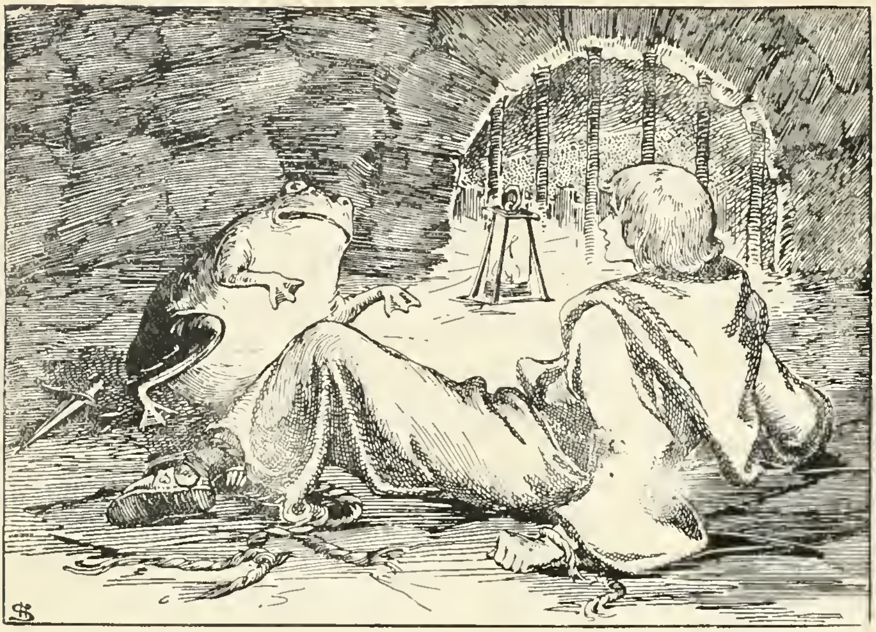
The shrunken toad sat alone in the corner. There was silence, but after a short interval there came from her breast a half-smothered sigh. It was as if, painfully, a soul awoke to life in a corner of her heart. She took one step forward, listened, took another step, and then with her awkward hands she seized the heavy bar that was placed before the door. Gently she put it back, and quietly she drew out the peg that was stuck in over the latch. She took the lighted lamp that stood in front of the rooms; it seemed as if a strong will gave her power. She drew the iron pin out of the bolted shutter, and moved gently towards the prisoner. He was asleep. She touched him with her cold, damp hand, and when he awoke and saw that hideous form, he shuddered, as if at an evil vision. She drew her knife, severed his bonds, and made signs to him to follow her.


WENT AWAY WRATHFUL AND SAD.

He called upon the holy Name, made the sign of the cross, and as the figure stood unchanged, he repeated the words of the Bible:—

"'The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.' Who art thou? Whence is this reptile shape that yet is so full of deeds of compassion?"

The toad-figure beckoned and guided him behind sheltering curtains by a solitary way out to the stable, pointed at a horse; he mounted it, and she seated herself before him and held on by the mane of the animal. The prisoner understood her, and they rode away at a quick trot, by a path he would never have discovered, out to the open heath.



"WHO ART THOU ?"

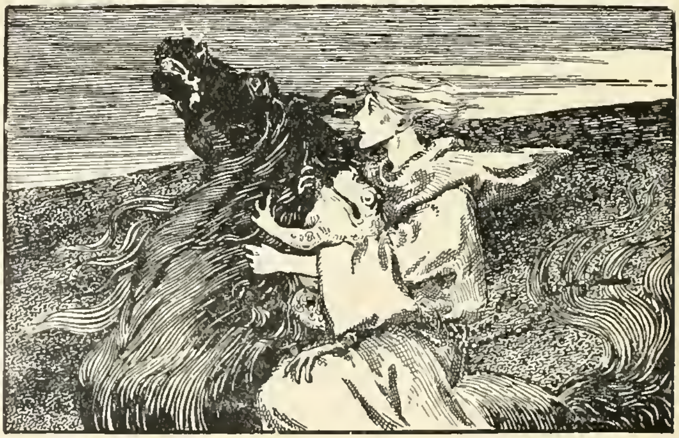
He forgot her hideous form, for the favour and mercy of the Lord were acting through this hobgoblin. He offered up pious prayers, and began to sing holy songs; and she trembled; was it the power of the prayers and hymns that acted upon her? or was it the coldness of the morning which was so quickly coming? What was it that she felt? She raised herself up in the breeze, and wished to stop the horse and spring off; but the Christian priest held her fast with all his strength, and sang aloud a Psalm, as if that would have power to loose the spell that held her in that hideous frog shape, and the horse galloped forward yet more wildly. The heaven became red; the first ray of the sun shot through the cloud, and with that clear spring of light came the change of form—she was the beautiful young girl with the demoniac, evil temper! In his arms he held a peerless maiden, and in utter terror he sprang from the horse and stopped it, for he thought he was encountering a new and deadly witchcraft. But young Helga at the same time leapt to the ground; the short child's frock reached only to her knees; she drew the sharp knife from her belt, and rushed at the startled man.

"Let me get at you!" she cried; "let me get at you, and you shall feel the knife. Yes, you are as pale as hay! Slave! Beardless boy!"

She pressed him hard; they were engaged in a severe conflict, but it was as if an unseen power gave strength to the Christian. He held her fast, and the old oak tree hard by came to his help, for its roots, half loosened from the earth, caught her feet as they slipped under them. A spring gushed forth quite close to them; he sprinkled her with the fresh water on breast and face, and charged the unclean spirit to come out of her, signing her with the cross, according to the Christian rite. But the water of baptism had no power there, where the spring of faith had not yet arisen within.

Yet herein also was he strong; more than a man's strength against the rival power of evil lay in his act, and as if it overwhelmed her, she dropped her arms, looked with a surprised glance and pale cheeks at him, who seemed a powerful sorcerer, strong in wizardry and secret lore. They were dark runes which he spoke, mystic signs which he was making in the air! She would not have blinked if he had swung an axe or a sharp knife before her eyes, but she did when he made the sign of the cross on her forehead and breast; she now sat like a tame bird, her head bowed down on her bosom.

Gently he told her of the work of



THE HORSE GALLOPED ON.

love she had done for him in the night, that she had come in the hideous skin of a frog, and had loosed his bonds, and brought him out to light and life. He said that she also was bound—bound in a closer bondage than he had been, but she, too, with him should come to light and life. He would bring her to Haddeby, to the holy Anskarius. There, in the Christian city, the enchantment would be broken. But he would not dare to carry her in front of him on the horse, although she herself was willing to sit there.

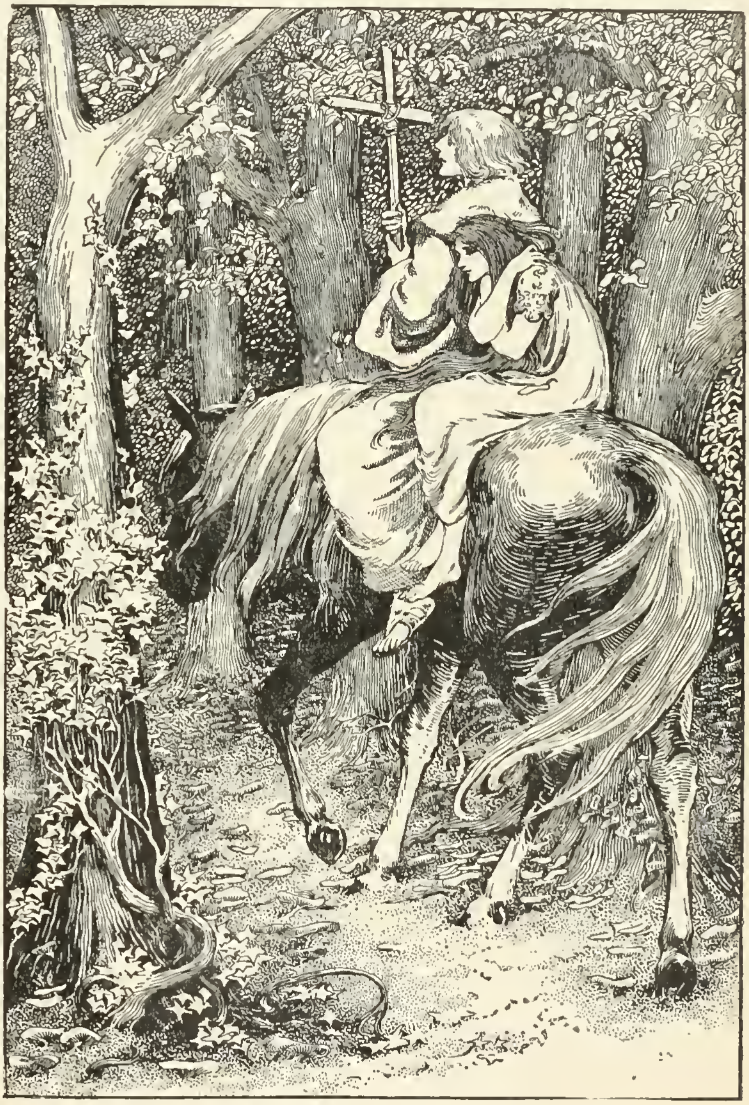
"You must sit behind me on the horse, not in front of me! Thy witch-beauty has a power that is from the evil one. I dread it—and yet there is victory for me in Christ!"

He bent his knees and prayed gently and earnestly. It was as if the silent glades of the forest were consecrated thereby into a holy church. The birds began to sing as if they belonged to a new brotherhood; the mint poured forth its fragrance as if it would take the place of incense. The priest proclaimed aloud the words of Holy Writ:—

"'The Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace!'"

And he spoke about the longing of the whole Creation, and whilst he spoke the horse, which had carried them in its wild race, stood quiet, and shook the great brambles, so that the ripe, juicy berries fell on little Helga's hand, offering themselves for her refreshment.

Patiently she let herself be lifted on to the back of the horse, and sat there like one walks in his sleep, who is not awake, but yet is not moving in his dream. The Christian fastened two boughs together with a strip of bark to form a cross, and held it aloft in his hands. So they rode through the forest, which became denser as the way grew deeper, or rather, there was no way at all. Sloes grew across the path; one was obliged to ride around them. The spring did not become a running brook, but a standing bog, and one had to ride around that. There was strength and refreshment in the fresh forest air; there was not less power in the word of gentleness which sounded in faith and Christian love, in the heartfelt desire to bring the possessed to light and life.



RODE THROUGH THE FOREST.

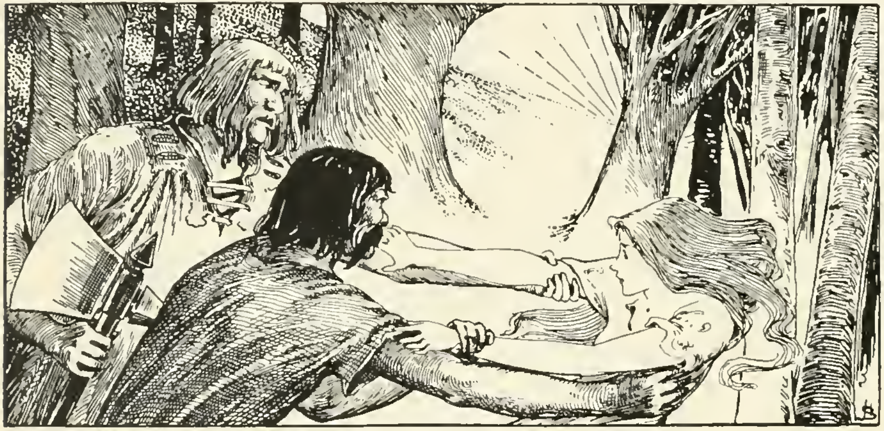
They say that the drops of rain can hollow the hard stone, the billows of the sea can in time wear smooth the broken, sharp-edged pieces of rock. The dew of Grace, which had descended upon little Helga, pierced the hardness and rounded the ruggedness of her nature, although it was not yet evident, and she was not yet aware of it herself. But what does the germ in the earth know of the refreshing moisture and the warm rays of the sun, while yet it is hiding within itself plant and flower?

As a mother's song for her child imperceptibly fastens itself into its mind, and it babbles single words after her, without understanding them, although they afterwards collect themselves in its thoughts, and become clear in the course of time, so in her the Word worked which is able to create.

They rode out of the forest, away over the heath, again through pathless forest, and towards evening they met some robbers.

"Where have you stolen that fair maiden?" they shouted; they stopped the horse, and snatched the two riders from it, for they were strong men. The priest had no other weapon than the knife which he had taken from little Helga to defend himself with; one of the robbers swung his axe, but the young Christian avoided it, and lightly sprang aside, or he would have been struck; but the edge of the axe sank deep into the horse's neck, so that the blood streamed out, and the animal fell to the earth. Then little Helga started, as if awakened out of a long, deep meditation, and threw herself down on the expiring animal. The Christian priest placed himself before her in order to defend her, but one of the robbers dashed a ponderous iron mace against his forehead, crushing it. The blood and brains spurted around, and he fell dead to the earth.

The robbers seized little Helga by her white arm. At that moment the sun went down, and as the last ray faded, she was changed to a hideous toad. Her greenish mouth opened across half her face; her arms became thin and slimy, and her hands grew broad and covered with webbing. Terror seized the robbers at the sight. She stood among them, a hideous monster; then, frog-like, hopped away, with bounds higher than she was herself, and vanished in the thicket. The robbers knew it for an evil trick of Loge, or secret magic art, and hurried away in affright.



THE SUN WENT DOWN AT THAT MOMENT.

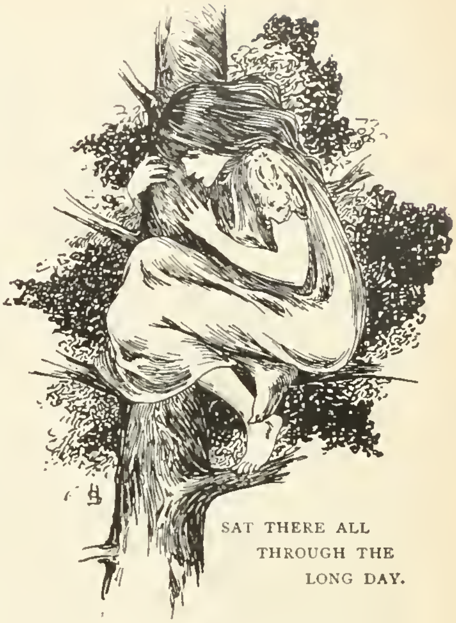
* * *

The full moon was already rising, and soon shone forth in splendour, and little Helga crept forth from the thicket in the skin of a wretched toad. She stood by the bodies of the Christian priest and of the horse, and she looked at them with eyes that seemed to weep. Her frog's head uttered a moan like a child beginning to cry. She threw herself now upon one, now upon the other: she took water in her hand, which the webbed skin had made larger and more hollow, and poured it over them. They were dead, and would remain dead; she understood that. Wild animals would soon come and devour their bodies; but that must not be! So she dug in the earth as deep as she could. To open a grave for them was her wish, but she had nothing to dig it with except a strong bough of a tree and her weak hands; but on them there was webbing stretched between her fingers. She tore it, and the blood flowed. These means would be of no use, she could see. Then she took water and washed the dead man's face, covered it with fresh green leaves, fetched great boughs and laid them over him, shook leaves between them, then took the heaviest stones she was able to lift, laid them over the dead bodies, and filled up the openings with moss. Then the mound seemed strong and protected, but this arduous task had occupied the entire night—the sun now burst forth, and little Helga stood in all her beauty, with bleeding hands, and, for the first time, with tears on her flushed maiden cheeks.

In this transformation, it seemed as if the two natures struggled within her. She trembled, and gazed around her as if she had awoke from a frightful dream. Running to a slender beech, she held fast to it for support, then climbed to the top of the tree, as lithely as a cat, and clung fast to it. There she sat like a frightened squirrel, sat there all through the long day in the deep solitude of the forest, where all is still and deathlike, as they say. Yet a pair of butterflies fluttered about at play or in quarrel; there were ant-hills close by with many hundreds of busy little creatures that crowded backwards and forwards. Countless gnats danced in the air, swarm upon swarm;

hosts of buzzing flies chased each other about; birds, dragonflies, and other small winged creatures filled the air. The earthworm crept out from the moist soil, the mole raised itself above the ground. In all else it was still and deathlike around, or what one calls deathlike indeed! Nothing took any notice of little Helga, except the jays, which flew screaming around the top of the tree where she was sitting. They jumped along the branches near her in daring inquisitiveness. One glance of her eye was enough to chase them away again; but they could not quite make her out, neither could she understand herself.

When evening was near, and the sun began to go down, her approaching change called her to movement again. She let herself slide down from the tree, and when the last ray of the sun disappeared, she sat there in the toad's shrunken form, with the webbed skin of her hands lacerated, but her eyes now sparkled with a brilliancy of beauty which they had scarcely possessed before, even in her beautiful human shape. They were now the gentle eyes of a pious maiden that looked from behind the reptile's outward shape, and told of a deepened mind, of a true human heart. The beautiful eyes swam with tears, heavy tears that relieved her heart.



SAT THERE ALL THROUGH THE LONG DAY.

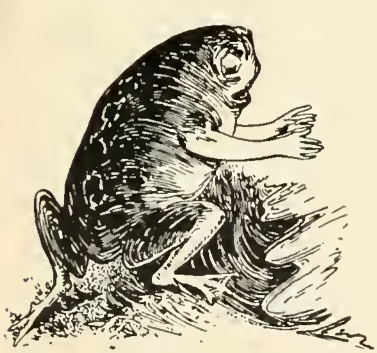
The cross of boughs bound together with a strip of bark, the last work of him who now lay dead and buried, was still lying on the grave she had made. Little Helga now took it, at some unprompted impulse, and planted it amongst the stones, over him and the slain horse. The sadness of the recollection brought tears to her eyes, and with the grief in her heart she traced the same sign in the earth around the grave that so honourably enclosed the dead. As with both hands she traced the sign of the cross, the webbing fell off like a torn glove! She washed herself in the water of the spring, and looked with astonishment at her fine white hands. Again made the sign of the cross in the air between herself and the grave; her lips quivered, her tongue moved, and that Name, which she had heard pronounced most frequently on her ride through the forest, came audibly from her mouth—she said, "Jesus Christ!"

The toad's skin fell off: she was a beautiful young maiden; but her head drooped wearily, her limbs needed repose—she slept.

Her slumber was short; at midnight she awoke. The dead horse was standing before her, shining, and full of life, that gleamed in light from its eyes and from its wounded neck. Close by she saw the murdered Christian priest, "more beautiful than Baldur!" as the Viking's wife would have said; and he appeared surrounded with a glory of fire.

There was an earnest look in his large, gentle eyes, just and searching, so penetrating a gaze that it seemed to shine into the inmost recesses of her heart. Little Helga trembled before it, and her memory was awakened with a power as if it was the Day of Judgment. Every kind action that had been done for her, every kindly word that had been spoken to her, seemed endued with life; she understood that it was mercy which had taken care of her during her days of trial, in which the child of spirit and clay works and strives. She owned that she had only followed the bent of her own desire, and had done nothing on her own part. Everything had been given to her everything had been allowed, so to speak. She bowed herself humbly, ashamed before Him who alone can read the hidden things of the heart; and in that instant there seemed to come to her a fiery touch of purifying flame—the flame of the Holy Spirit.

"Thou daughter of the mire," said the Christian priest, "from the mire, from the earth thou art sprung; from earth thou shalt again arise. The fire within thee returns in personality to its source; the ray is not from the sun, but from God. No soul shall perish, but far distant is the time when life shall be merged in eternity. I come from the land of the dead; so shalt thou at some time travel through the deep valley to the shining hill-country, where grace and fulness dwell. I may not lead thee to Hadde for Christian baptism. First thou must burst the water-



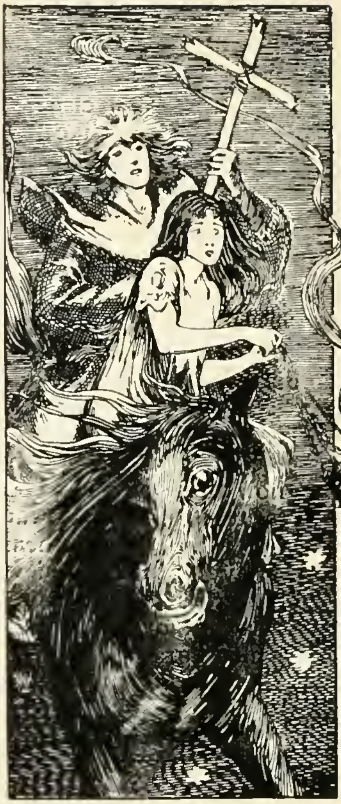
LOOKED WITH ASTONISHMENT AT HER FINE WHITE HANDS.

shield over the deep moorland, and draw up the living root that gave thee life and cradled thee. Thou must do thy work before the consecration may come to thee."

And he lifted her on to the horse, handed her a golden censer, like that which she had seen in the Viking's castle, from which there came a sweet, strong fragrance. The open wound on the forehead of the slain shone like a radiant diadem. He took the cross from the grave, raised it on high ; and now they went off through the air, over the rustling forest, then over the mounds where the warriors were buried, sitting on their dead steeds ; and these majestic forms arose, and rode out to the tops of the hills. A broad golden hoop with a gold knob gleamed on their foreheads in the moonlight, and their cloaks fluttered in the wind. The dragon that sits and broods over treasure raised its head, and looked after them. Dwarfs peered forth from the hills, and the furrows swarmed with red, blue, and green lights, like a cluster of sparks in a burnt piece of paper.

Away over wood and heath, stream and pool, they flew to the moor, and floated over that in great circles. The Christian priest raised the cross on high ; it shone like gold, and from his lips came the eucharistic chant. Little Helga sang with him, as a child joins in the song of its mother. She swung the censer, and there came a fragrance as if from an altar, so powerful, so subtly operating, that the rushes and reeds of the moor put forth their flowers. All the germs sprang up from the deep soil ; everything that had life arose. A veil of water-lilies spread itself like an embroidered carpet of flowers, and on it lay a sleeping woman, young and beautiful. Little Helga thought she saw herself mirrored in the still water ; but it was her mother that she saw, the Marsh King's wife, the princess from the waters of the Nile.

The dead Christian priest bade the sleeper be lifted on to the horse ; but that sank under the burden as if its body was only a winding-sheet flying in the breeze ; but the sign of the cross made the airy phantom strong, and all three rode to the firm ground.


THE CHRISTIAN PRIEST RAISED HIS CROSS ON HIGH.

A cock crowed in the Viking's stronghold. The phantoms rose up in the mist, and were dispersed in the wind, but mother and daughter stood there together.

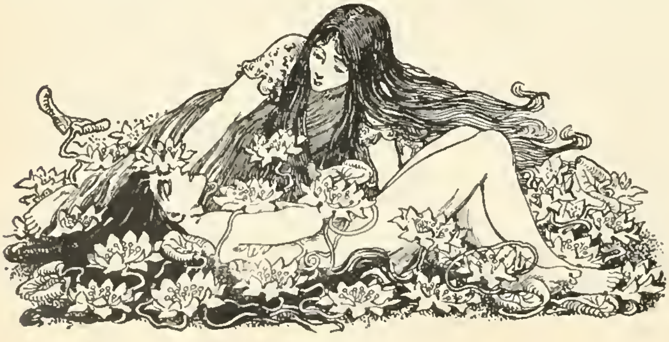
"Is that myself that I see in the deep water?" said the mother.

"Is that myself that I see in the bright shield?" exclaimed the daughter ; and they came close together, breast to breast, in each other's arms. The mother's heart beat strongest, and she understood it all.

"My child! My own heart's flower! My lotus from the deep waters!"

And she embraced her child, and wept over her ; and the tears were as a baptism of new life and affection for little Helga.

"I came hither in a swan's skin, and I took it off," said the mother. "I sank through the quivering swamp, deep into the mire of the bog, that enclosed me as with a wall. But soon I found a fresher current about me ; a power seemed to draw me ever deeper and deeper. I felt a pressure of sleep on my eyelids ; I slept, I dreamt—I seemed to lie again in the pyramids of Egypt ; but there still stood before me the moving elder-stump, which had frightened me on the surface of the moor. I looked at the crevices in the bark, and they shone forth in colours and became hieroglyphics—it was the case of a mummy which I was looking at. That burst, and out of it stepped a lord a thousand years old, a mummy form, black as pitch, shining black like a wood-snail or the slimy black mud—the Marsh King, or the mummy of the

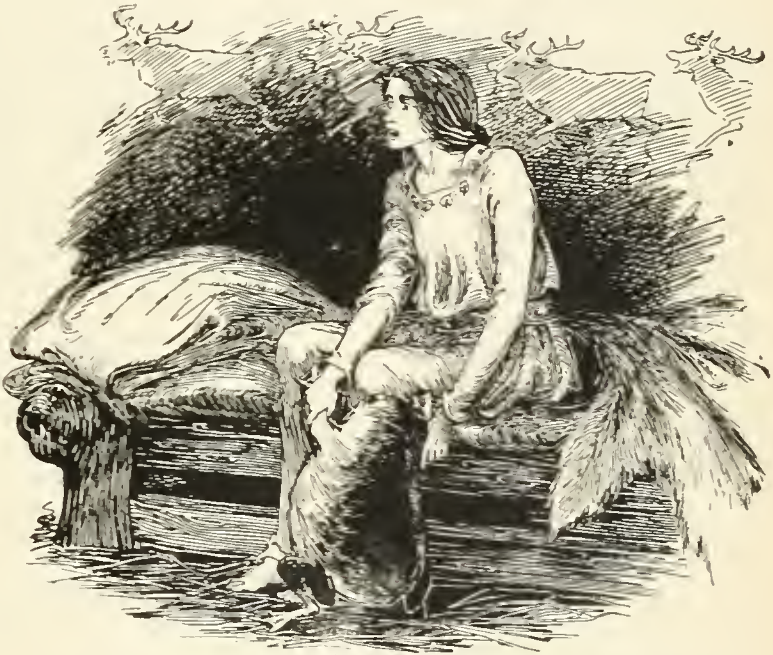

LAY A SLEEPING WOMAN.

pyramid, I did not know which. He flung his arms about me, and I felt that I should die. When I first returned to life again, and my breast became warm, there was a little bird which beat its wings, and twittered and sang. It flew up from my breast towards the dark, heavy roof, but a long green band still fastened it to me. I heard and understood its longing notes: 'Liberty! sunshine! to my father!' Then I thought of my father in the sun-lit land of my home, my life, my affection! and I loosed the band and let him flutter away—home to his father. Since that hour I have not dreamed; I slept a long and heavy sleep till the moment when the sounds and fragrance arose and raised me."

That green band from the mother's heart to the bird's wings, whither had it passed now? where was it lying cast away? Only the stork had seen it. The band was that green stalk; the knot was that shining flower which served as a cradle for the child who now had grown in beauty, and again reposed near the mother's heart.

And whilst they stood there in close embrace, the father-stork flew in circles about them, made speed to his nest, fetched from thence the feather dresses kept for so many years, and threw one over each of them; and they flew, and raised themselves from the earth like two white swans.

"Let us talk," said father-stork, "now that we can understand each other's speech, although the beak is cut differently on one bird and on the other! It is the most lucky thing possible that you come to-night. In the morning we should have been off, mother, and I, and the young ones! We are flying to the South! Yes, look at me! I am an old friend from the land of the Nile, and that is the mother; she has more in her heart than in her chatter. She always believed that the princess was only taking care of herself. I and the young ones have brought the swan-skins here. Well, how glad I am! And what a fortunate thing it is that I am here still! At daybreak we shall set off, a large party of storks. We fly in front; you can fly behind, and then you will not mistake the way. I and the young ones will then be able to keep an eye upon you!"


IN THE HIDEOUS FORM OF A TOAD, TREMBLING AND NESTLING UP AGAINST HER FOSTER-MOTHER.

"And the lotus flower, that I ought to bring," said the Egyptian princess, "it flies in swan's plumage by my side! I have the flower of my heart with me; thus it has released itself. Homeward! homeward!"

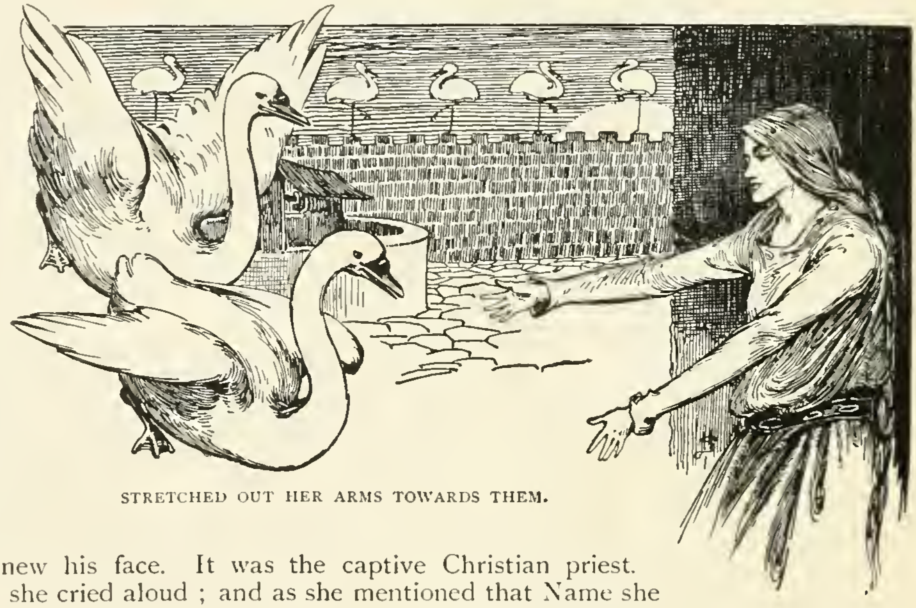
But Helga said that she could not leave the land of Denmark till she had once more seen her foster-mother, the kind wife of the Viking. In Helga's thoughts came up every beautiful remembrance, every affectionate word, every tear which her foster-mother had shed, and it almost seemed at that instant as if she clung closest to that mother.

"Yes, we will go to the Viking's house," said the stork-father. "There I expect mother and the young ones. How they will open their eyes and chatter about it! Yes, mother doesn't say so very much; what she does is short and pithy, and so she thinks the best! I will sound the rattle directly, so that she will hear we are coming."

And so father-stork chattered his beak, and flew with the swans to the Viking's stronghold.

Every one there was lying deep in slumber. The Viking's wife had not gone to rest till late that night; she was still in fear for little Helga, who had disappeared three days ago with the Christian priest. She must have helped him to escape, for it was her horse that was missing from the stable. By what power had all this been brought about? The Viking's wife thought about the wonderful works which she had heard were performed by the White Christ, and by those who believed in Him and followed Him. Her changing thoughts shaped themselves into a dream. It appeared to her that she was still sitting on her bed, awake, and meditating, and that darkness shrouded everything outside. A storm arose; she heard the rolling of the sea in the west and the east, from the North Sea and the waters of the Cattegat. That huge serpent which encircles the earth in the depths of the ocean shook convulsively; it was Ragnarök, the twilight of the gods, as the heathen called the last hour, when everything should pass away, even the high gods themselves. The trumpet sounded, and the gods rode forth over the rainbow, arrayed in steel, to take part in the last contest. Before them flew the winged warrior-maidens, and behind them in array marched the forms of dead warriors. The whole sky was illuminated by the northern lights, but the darkness again prevailed. It was an appalling hour.

And close by the frightened Viking's wife little Helga sat on the floor in the hideous form of a toad, trembling and nestling herself up against her foster-mother, who took her on her lap and affectionately held her fast, although she seemed more hideous than a toad. The air was full of the sound of sword-strokes and the blows of maces, of arrows whizzing, as if a furious hail-storm was raging above them. The hour had come when earth and heaven should fail, the stars should fall, and everything be burned up in the fire of Surtr; but the dreamer knew that a new earth and heaven would come, and the corn wave where the sea now rolled over the barren sand bottom; that the God who cannot be named rules, and up to Him rose Baldur, the gentle and kind, loosed from the realm of death. He came — the Viking's wife saw him, and knew his face. It was the captive Christian priest.



STRETCHED OUT HER ARMS TOWARDS THEM.

"White Christ!" she cried aloud; and as she mentioned that Name she pressed a kiss on the hideous forehead of her frog-child; the toad's skin fell off, and little Helga stood there in all her beauty, gentle as she had never been before, and with beaming eyes. She kissed her foster-mother's hands, blessed her for all her care and affection with which she had surrounded her in the days of her distress and trial; thanked her for the thoughts to which she had given birth in her; thanked her for mentioning the Name which she repeated, "White Christ!" and then little Helga rose up as a noble swan, her wings expanded themselves wide, wide, with a rustling as when a flock of birds of passage flies away!

With that the Viking's wife awoke, and still heard outside the same strong sound of wings. She knew that it was time for the storks to depart, and no doubt that was what she heard. Still, she wished to see them once before their journey, and to bid them farewell. She stood up, went out on to the balcony, and there she saw on the ridge of the out-house rows of storks, and round the courtyard and over the lofty trees crowds of others were flying in great circles. But straight in front of her, on the edge of the well, where little Helga had so often sat and frightened her with her wildness, two swans now sat and looked at her with intelligent eyes. Her dream came to her mind; it still quite filled her as if it had been reality. She thought of little Helga in the form of a swan, she thought of the Christian priest, and she felt a strange joy in her heart.

The swans beat their wings, and bent their necks, as if they wished so to salute her; and the Viking's wife stretched out her arms towards them as if she understood, and smiled at them through her tears.

Then, with a noise of wings and chattering, all the storks arose to start on their journey to the south.

“We cannot wait for the swans!” said mother-stork. “If they wish to come with us they may; but we can't wait here till the plovers start! It is a very good thing to travel in family parties; not like the chaffinches and ruffs, where the males fly by themselves and the females by themselves; that is certainly not proper! And what are those swans flapping their wings for?”

“Every one flies in his own way!” said father-stork. “The swans go in slanting line, the cranes in a triangle, and the plovers in a wavy, snake-like line.”

“Don't mention serpents when we are flying up here!” said mother-stork; “it only excites the appetites of our young ones when they can't be satisfied.”

* * * * *

“Are those the high mountains down there which I have heard of?” asked Helga in the swan's skin.

“Those are thunder-clouds which drive below us,” said the mother.

“What are those white clouds which lift themselves so high?” asked Helga.

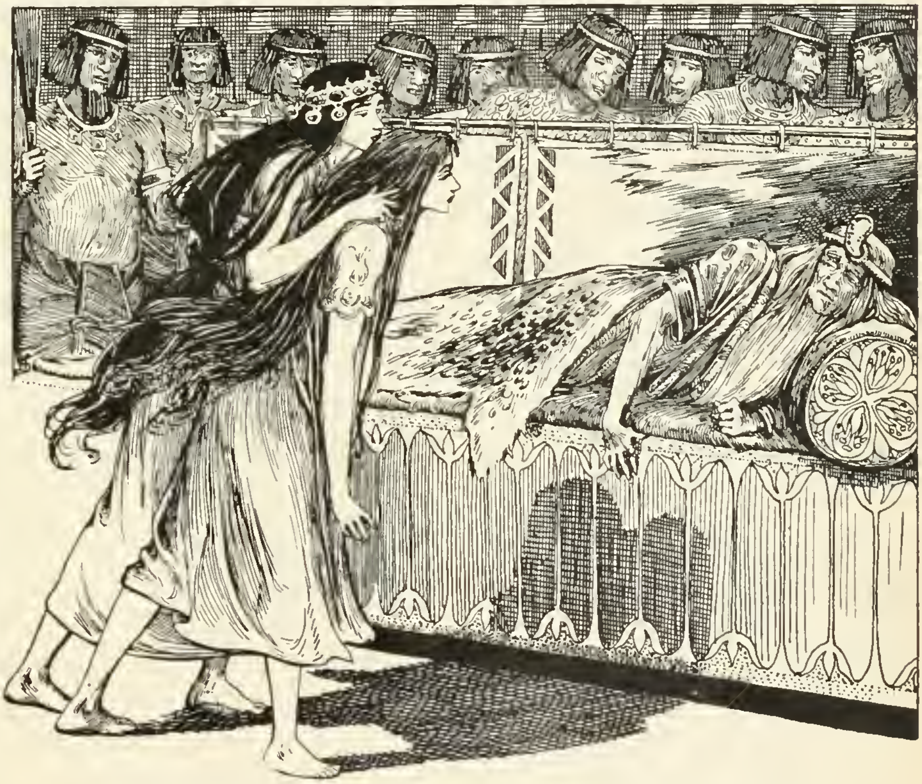
“Those are the everlasting snow-clad hills, which you see,” said the mother; and they flew over the Alps, down towards the blue Mediterranean.

* * *

“Land of Africa! Coast of Egypt!” jubilantly sang the daughter of the Nile in her swan form, when, high in the air, she descried her native land, like a yellowish white, undulating streak.

And as the birds saw it, they hastened their flight.

“I smell the mud of the Nile and the wet frogs!” said mother-stork. “It quite excites me! Yes, now you shall taste them; now you shall see the adjutant bird, the ibis, and the cranes! They all belong to our family, but they are not nearly so handsome as we are. They stick themselves up, especially the idis; he is now quite pampered by the Egyptians—they make a mummy of him, and stuff him with aromatic herbs. I would rather be stuffed with live frogs, and so would you, and so you shall be. It is better to have something inside you while you live, than to be in state when you are dead! That is my opinion, and that is always right!”



THERE STOOD TWO BEAUTIFUL WOMEN AS LIKE AS TWO DROPS OF DEW.

“Now the storks are come!” they said in the rich house on the bank of the Nile, where, in the open hall on soft cushions covered with a leopard's skin, the royal master lay outstretched, neither living nor dead, hoping for the lotus flower from the deep marsh in the north. Kinsmen and servants stood around him.

And into the hall flew two beautiful white swans, which had come with the storks! They threw off their dazzling feather dress, and there stood two beautiful women, as much alike as two drops of dew! They bent down over the pale, withered old man; they put back their long hair, and when little Helga stooped over her grandfather, the colour returned to his cheeks, his eyes sparkled, and life came into his stiffened limbs. The old man raised himself healthy and vigorous;

daughter and granddaughter held him in their arms as if they were giving him a morning salutation in their joy after a long, heavy dream.

* * * * *

And there was joy over all the house and in the storks' nest, but there it was chiefly over the good food, and the swarming hosts of frogs; and whilst the learned men made haste to note down in brief the history of the two princesses and the flower of health, which was such a great event and a blessing for house and country, the parent storks related it in their fashion to their own family, but not till they had all satisfied their hunger, or else they would have had something else to do than to listen to stories.

"Now you will become somebody!" whispered mother-stork; "that is certain!"

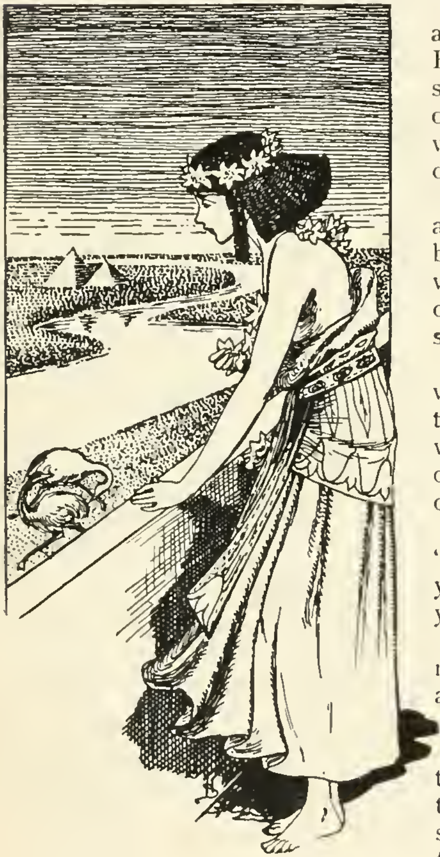
"Well! what should I become?" said father-stork; "and what have I done? A mere nothing!"

"You have done more than all the others! But for you and the young ones the two princesses would never have seen Egypt again, and made the old man well. You will become somebody! You will certainly receive a Doctor's degree, and our young ones will bear it afterwards, and their young ones will have it in turn. You look already like an Egyptian doctor—in my eyes!"

The wise and learned expounded the fundamental idea, as they called it, that ran through the whole history: "Love brings forth life!"—they gave that explanation in different ways—"the warm sunbeam was the Egyptian princess, she descended to the Marsh King, and in their meeting the flower sprang forth——"

"I can't repeat the words quite right," said father-stork, who had heard it from the roof, and was expected to tell them all about it in his nest. "What they said was so involved, it was so clever, that they immediately received honours and gifts. Even the head cook obtained a high mark of distinction—that was for the soup!"

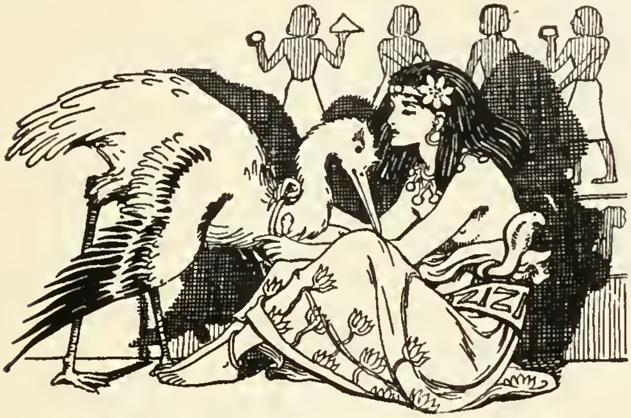
"And what did you receive?" inquired mother-stork; "they ought not to forget the most important, and that is yourself. The learned have only chattered about it all, but your turn will come!"



SHE SAW TWO POWERFUL OSTRICHES RUNNING ROUND IN NARROW CIRCLES.

Late that night, while peaceful slumber enwrapped the now prosperous house, there was one who was still awake; and that was not the father-stork, though he stood on one leg in the nest and slept like a sentinel. No, little Helga was awake. She leaned out over the balcony and gazed at the clear sky with the great, bright stars, larger and purer in their lustre than she had seen them in the north, and yet the same. She thought of the Viking's wife by the moor, of her foster-mother's gentle eyes, and the tears she had shed over her poor toad-child, who now stood in the light and splendour of the stars by the waters of the Nile in the soft air of spring. She thought of the love in that heathen woman's breast, that love which she had shown to a miserable creature who, in human form, was an evil brute, and in the form of an animal, loathsome to look at and to touch. She looked at the shining stars, and called to mind the splendour on the forehead of the dead man, when they flew away over forest and moor; tones resounded in her recollection, words she had heard pronounced when they rode away, and she sat as if paralyzed—words about the great Author of Love, the highest Love, embracing all generations.

Yes, how much had been given, gained, obtained! Little Helga's thoughts were occupied, night and day, with all her good fortune, and she stood in contemplation of it like a child which turns quickly from the giver to all the beautiful presents that have been given; so she rose up in her increasing happiness, which could come and would come. She was indeed borne in mysterious ways to even higher joy and happiness, and in this she lost herself one day so entirely that she thought no more of the Giver. It was the strength of youthful courage that inspired her bold venture. Her eyes shone, but suddenly she was called back by a great clamour in the courtyard beneath. There she saw two powerful ostriches running hurriedly about in narrow circles. She had never before seen that creature, so great a bird, so clumsy and heavy. Its wings looked as if they were clipped, the bird itself as if it had been injured, and she inquired what had been done to it, and, for the first time, heard the tradition which the Egyptians relate about the ostrich.



PLACED THE GOLDEN CIRCLET ABOUT HIS NECK.

The race had at one time been beautiful, its wings large and powerful; then, one evening, a mighty forest bird said to it: "Brother, shall we fly to the river in the morning, if God will, and drink?" And the ostrich replied: "I will." When day broke they flew off, at first high up towards the sun — the eye of God — ever higher and higher, the ostrich far before all the others; it flew in its pride towards the light; it relied on its own strength, and not on the Giver; it did not say, "If God will!" Then the avenging angel drew back the veil from the burning flame, and in that instant the bird's wings were burnt; it sank miserably to the earth. Its descendants are no longer able to raise themselves; they fly in terror, rush about in circles in that narrow space. It is a reminder to us men, in all our thoughts, in all our actions, to say: "If God will!"

And Helga thoughtfully bowed her head, looked at the hurrying ostrich, saw its fear, saw its silly delight at the sight of its own great shadow on the white sunlit wall. And deep seriousness fixed itself into her mind and thoughts. So rich a life, so full of prosperity, was given, was obtained —what would happen? What was yet to come? The best thing: "If God will!"

* * * * *

In the early spring, when the storks again started for the north, little Helga took her gold bracelet, scratched her name on it, beckoned to the stork-father, placed the golden circlet about his neck, and asked him to bear it to the Viking's wife, by which she would understand that her foster-daughter was alive, and that she was happy, and thought of her.

"That is heavy to carry!" thought the father-stork when it was placed around his neck; "but one does not throw gold and honour on the highroad. They will find it true up there that the stork brings fortune!"

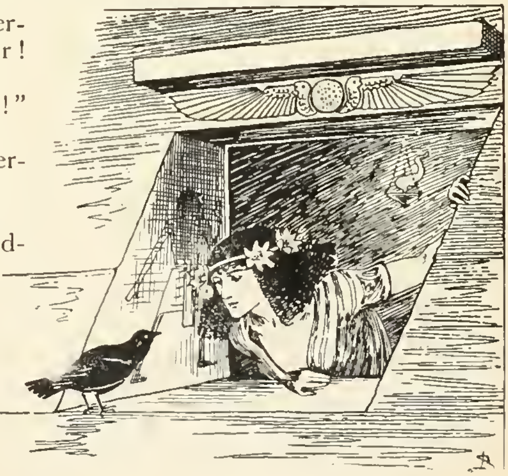
"You lay gold, and I lay eggs!" said the mother-stork; "but you only lay once, and I lay every year! But it vexes me that neither of us is appreciated."

"But we are quite aware of it ourselves, mother!" said father-stork.

"But you can't hang that on you," said mother-stork. "It neither gives us fair wind nor food."

And so they flew.

The little nightingale, that sang in the tamarind-bush, also wished to start for the north immediately. Little Helga had often heard him up there near the moor; she wished to give him a message, for she understood the speech of birds when she flew in the swan's skin, and she had often since that time, used it with the stork and the swallow. The nightingale would understand her, and she asked him to fly to the beech-forest on the peninsula of Jutland, where she had erected the grave of stones and boughs; there she asked him to bid all the small birds to protect the grave, and always to sing their songs around it. And the nightingale flew—and time flew also.



ASKED HIM TO FLY TO THE BEECH-FOREST.

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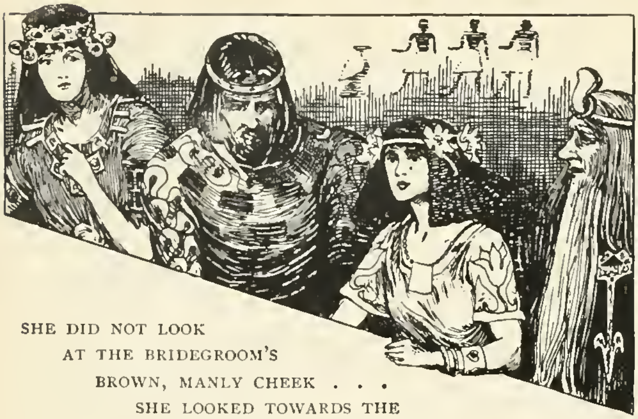
The eagle stood on the pyramid in the autumn, and saw a magnificent array of richly-laden



SHE DID NOT LOOK AT THE BRIDEGROOM'S BROWN, MANLY CHEEK . . . SHE LOOKED TOWARDS THE TWINKLING, SPARKLING STARS.

camels, with armed men in costly clothing, on snorting Arabian steeds, shining as white as silver, and with red quivering nostrils, their heavy thick manes hanging down about their slender legs. Rich visitors, a royal prince from the land of Arabia, beautiful as a prince ought to be, came to that noble house, where the storks' nest now stood empty, its former occupants now far away in the northern land, but soon to return. And they came exactly on that day which was most filled with joy and mirth. There was a grand wedding, and little Helga was the bride, arrayed in silk and jewels; the bridegroom was the young prince from the land of Arabia; and the two sat highest at the table between the mother and grandfather. But she did not look at the bridegroom's brown, manly cheek, where his black beard curled; she did not look at his dark, fiery eyes, which were fastened upon her; she looked outwards and upwards towards the twinkling, sparkling stars, which beamed down from heaven.

Then there was a rustling sound of strong wing-strokes outside in the air—the storks had returned; and the old couple, however tired they might be with the journey, and however much they needed rest, still flew on to the railing of the verandah immediately they were aware whose festivity it was. They had already heard, at the frontier of the country, that little Helga had allowed them to be painted on the wall because they belonged to her history.

"That is very nicely borne in mind," said father-stork.

"It is very little!" said the stork-mother; "she could not have done less."

And when Helga saw them, she got up and went out into the verandah to them to pat them on the back. The old storks curtsied with their necks, and the youngest of their young ones looked on, and felt themselves honoured.

And Helga looked up to the bright stars which shone clearer and clearer; and between them and her, a form seemed to move still purer than the air, and seen through it, that hovered quite near her—it was the dead Christian priest; so he came on the day of her festivity, came from the Kingdom of Heaven.

"The splendour and glory which are there, surpass everything that earth knows!" he said.

And little Helga prayed gently and from her heart, as she had never prayed before, that she only for one single minute might dare to look within, might only cast one single glance into the Kingdom of Heaven, to the Father of all.

And he raised her into the splendour and glory, in one current of sounds and thoughts; it was not only round about her that it shone and sounded, but within her. No words are able to describe it.

"Now we must return; you are wanted!" he said.

"Only one glance more!" she entreated; "only one short minute!"

"We must go back to the earth; all the guests have gone away."

"Only one glance! the last——"

* * * * *

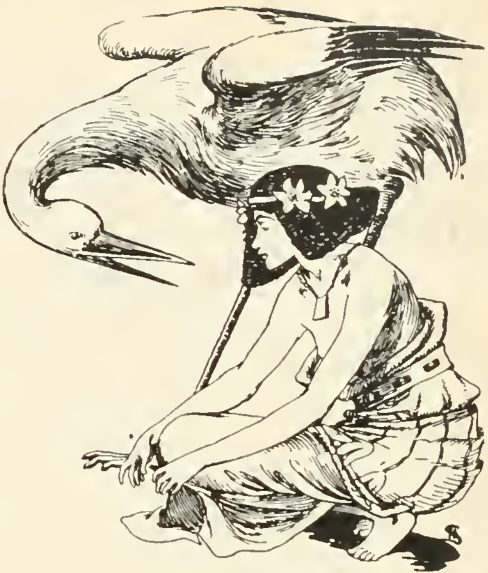
And little Helga stood outside in the verandah; but all the torches outside were extinguished, all the lights in the wedding chamber were gone, the storks were gone, no guests to be seen, no bridegroom; everything seemed to be blown away in three short minutes.

Then Helga was filled with terror, and she went through the great, empty hall, into the next room. Strange soldiers were sleeping there. She opened a side door that led into her apartment, and when she expected to stand there, she found herself outside in the garden; but it was not like this before—the heaven was red and shining, it was towards daybreak.

Only three minutes in Heaven, and a whole night had passed on the earth!

* * * * *

Then she saw the storks; she cried to them, speaking their language, and father-stork turned his head, listened, and drew near her.



FELL ON HER KNEES.

"You are speaking our language!" said he; "what do you want? Why do you come here you strange woman?"

"It is I! it is Helga! Don't you know me? Three minutes ago we were talking together, yonder in the verandah."

"That is a mistake!" said the stork; "you must have dreamt it!"

"No, no!" she said, and reminded him of the Viking's stronghold and the moor, and of the journey hither!

Then father-stork blinked his eyes: "That is a very old story; I have heard it from my great-great-great-grandmother's time! Yes, certainly, there was such a princess in Egypt from the land of Denmark, but she disappeared on the night of her wedding many hundreds of years ago, and never came back again. That you may read for yourself on the monument in the garden; there are sculptured both swans and storks, and at the top you yourself stand in white marble."

It was indeed so. Little Helga saw it, understood it, and fell on her knees.

The sun broke forth, and as in former times at the touch of its beams the toad form disappeared and the beautiful shape was seen, so she raised herself now at the baptism of light in a form of brighter beauty, purer than the air, a ray of light—to the Father of all.

Her body sank in dust; there lay a faded lotus-flower where she had stood.

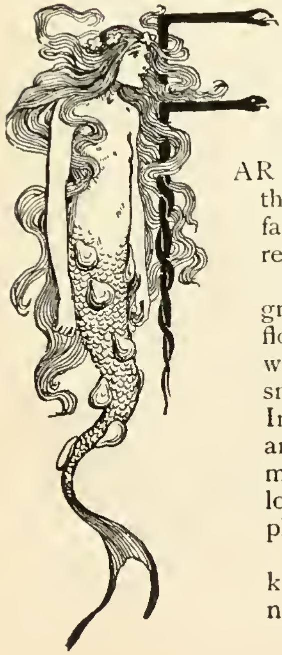
* * * * *

"Then that was a new ending to the story!" said the father-stork. "I had not at all expected it! but I rather like it!"

"I wonder what my young ones will say about it!" said the mother-stork.

"Yes, that is certainly the principal thing!" answered the father.

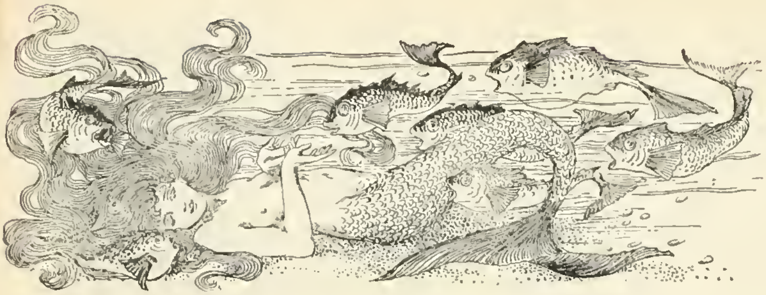
The Little Mermaid



FAR out at sea, the water is as blue as the prettiest cornflowers, and as clear as the purest crystal. But it is very deep—so deep, indeed, that no rope can fathom it; and many church steeples need be piled one upon the other to reach from the bottom to the surface. It is there that the sea-folk dwell.

Nor must it be imagined that there is nothing but a bare, white, sandy ground below. No, indeed! The soil produces the most curious trees and flowers, whose leaves and stems are so flexible that the slightest motion of the waters seems to fluster them as if they were living creatures. Fishes, great and small, glide through the branches as birds fly through the trees here upon earth. In the deepest spot of all stands the sea-king's palace; its walls are of coral, and its tall pointed windows of the clearest amber, while the roof is made of mussel shells, that open and shut according to the tide. And beautiful they look, for in each shell lies a pearl, any one of which would be worthy to be placed in a queen's crown.

The sea-king had been a widower for many years, so his aged mother kept house for him. She was a very wise woman, but extremely proud of her noble birth, which entitled her to wear twelve oyster shells on her tail, while



ATE OUT OF THEIR HANDS, AND ALLOWED THEMSELVES TO BE STROKED.

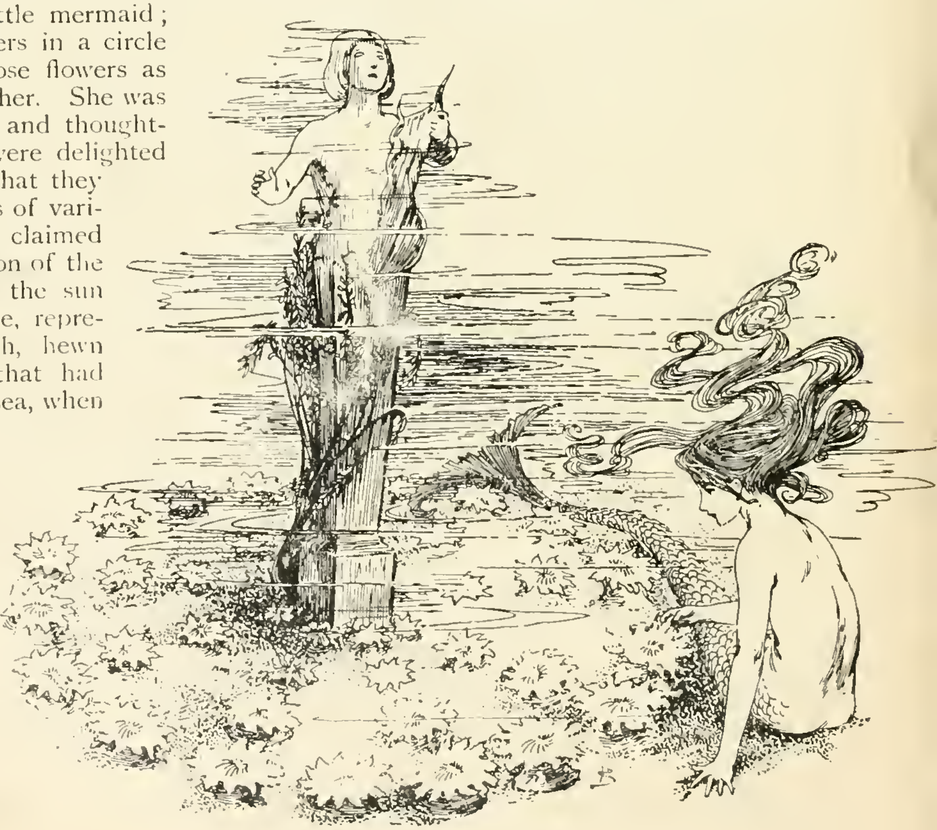
other well-born persons might only wear six. In all other respects she was a very praiseworthy sort of body; and especially as regards the care she took of the little princesses, her granddaughters. They were six pretty children; but the youngest was the prettiest of all. Her skin was as clear and delicate as a rose leaf, and her eyes as blue as the deepest sea; but she had no feet any more than the others, and her body ended in a fish's tail.

They were free to play about all day long in the vast rooms of the palace below water, where live flowers grew upon the walls. The large amber windows were opened, when the fishes would swim inwards to them just as the swallows fly into our houses when we open the windows; only the fishes swam right up to the princesses, ate out of their hands, and allowed themselves to be stroked.

In front of the palace was a large garden with bright red and dark blue trees, whose fruit glittered like gold, and whose blossoms were like fiery sparks, as both stalks and leaves kept rustling continually. The ground was strewn with the most delicate sand, but blue as the flames of sulphur. The whole atmosphere was of a peculiar blue tint that would have led you to believe you were hovering high up in the air, with clouds above and below you, rather than standing at the bottom of the sea. When the winds were calm, the sun was visible; and to those below it looked like a scarlet flower shedding light from its calyx.

Each of the little princesses had a plot of ground in the garden, where she might dig and plant as she pleased. One sowed her flowers so as to come up in the shape of a whale; another preferred the figure of a little mermaid; but the youngest planted hers in a circle to imitate the sun, and chose flowers as red as the sun appeared to her. She was a singular child, both silent and thoughtful; and while her sisters were delighted with all the strange things that they obtained through the wrecks of various ships, she had never claimed anything—with the exception of the red flowers that resembled the sun above — but a pretty statue, representing a handsome youth, hewn out of pure white marble that had sunk to the bottom of the sea, when a ship ran aground. She planted a bright red weeping-willow beside the statue; and when the tree grew up, its fresh boughs hung over it nearly down to the blue sands, where the shadow looked quite violet, and kept dancing about like the branches. It seemed as if the top of the tree were at play with its roots, and each trying to snatch a kiss.

There was nothing she delighted in so much as to



THE YOUNGEST PLANTED HERS IN A CIRCLE TO IMITATE THE SUN.

hear about the upper world. She was always asking her grandmother to tell her all she knew about ships, towns, people, and animals. What struck her as most beautiful was that the flowers of the earth should shed perfumes, which they do not below the sea; that the forests were green, and that the fishes amongst the trees should sing so loud and so exquisitely that it must be a treat to hear them. It was the little birds that her grandmother called fishes, or else her young listeners would not have understood her, for they had never seen birds.

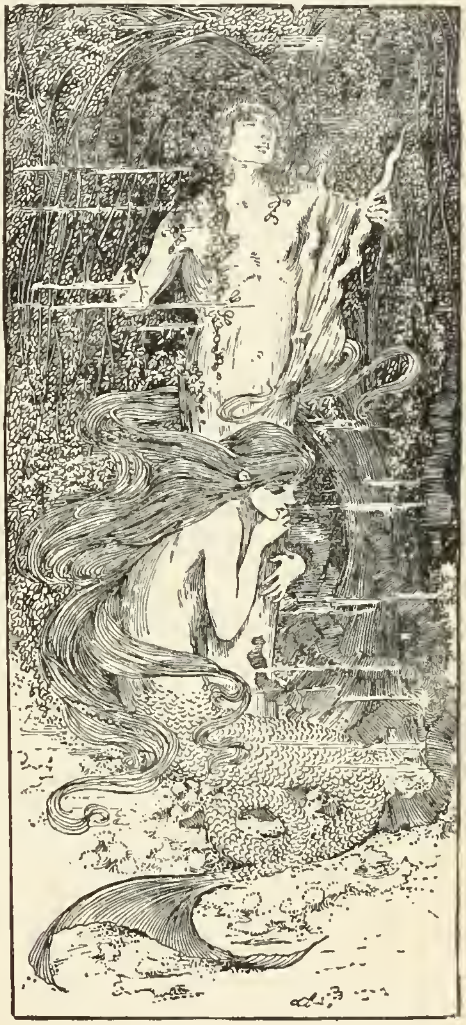
"When you have accomplished your fifteenth year," said the grandmother, "you shall have leave to rise up out of the sea, and sit on the rocks in the moonshine, and look at the large ships sailing past. And then you will see both forests and towns."

In the following year one of the sisters would reach the age of fifteen, but as all the rest were each a year younger than the other, the youngest would have to wait five years before it would be her turn to come up from the bottom of the ocean, and see what our world is like. However, the eldest promised to tell the others what she saw, and what struck her as most beautiful on the first day; for their grandmother did not tell them enough, and there were so many things they wanted to know.

But none of them longed for her turn to come so intensely as the youngest, who had to wait the longest, and was so reserved and thoughtful. Many a night did she stand at the open window, and gaze upwards through the dark blue water, and watch the fishes as they lashed the sea with their fins and tails. She could see the moon and stars, that appeared, indeed, rather pale, though much larger, seen through the water, than they do to us. If something resembling a black cloud glided between the stars and herself, she knew that it was either a whale swimming overhead, or a ship full of human beings, none of whom probably dreamed that a lovely little mermaid was standing below, and stretching forth her white hands towards the keel of their vessel.

The eldest princess was now fifteen, and was allowed to rise up to the surface of the sea.

On her return she had a great deal to relate; but the most delightful thing of all, she said, was to lie upon a sand-bank in the calm sea, and to gaze upon the large city near the coast, where lights were shining like hundreds of stars; to listen to the sounds of music, to the din of carriages, and the busy hum of the crowd; and to see the church steeples, and hear the bells ringing. And she longed after all these things, just because she could not approach them.

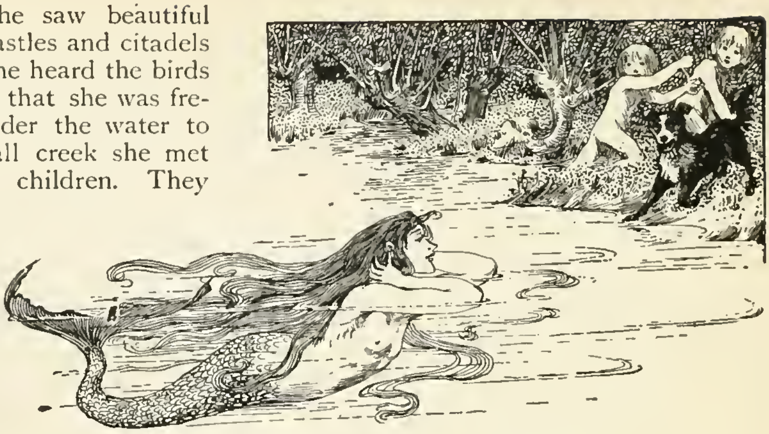


A STATUE, REPRESENTING A HANDSOME YOUTH, HEWN OUT OF PURE WHITE MARBLE.

Oh, how attentively her youngest sister listened! And later in the evening, when she stood at the open window, and gazed up through the dark blue water, how she thought about the large city, with its din and bustle, and even fancied she could hear the church bells ringing from below.

In the following year, the second sister obtained leave to rise up to the surface of the water, and swim about at her pleasure. She went up just at sunset, which appeared to her the finest sight of all. She said that the whole sky appeared like gold, and as to the clouds, their beauty was beyond all description. Red and violet clouds sailed rapidly above her head, while a flock of wild swans, resembling a long white scarf, flew still faster than they across the sea towards the setting sun. She, too, swam towards it, but the sun sank down, and the rosy hues vanished from the surface of the water and from the skies.

The year after, the third sister went up. She was the boldest of them all, so she swam up a

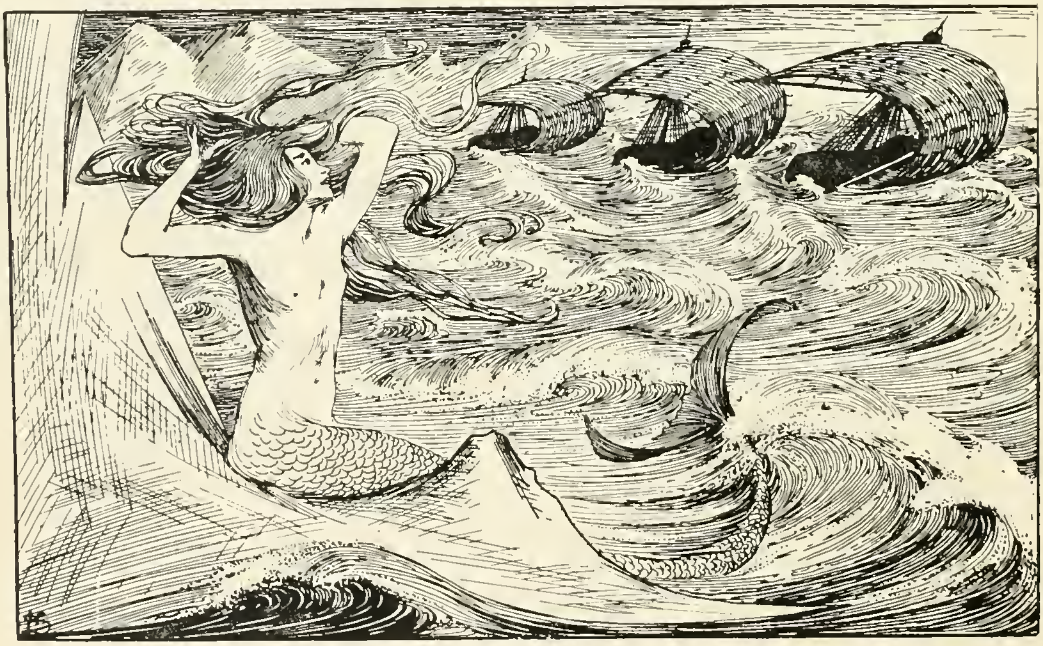


THEY FLEW AWAY IN GREAT ALARM.

river that fell into the sea. She saw beautiful green hills covered with vines; castles and citadels peeped out from stately woods; she heard the birds singing, and the sun felt so warm that she was frequently obliged to dive down under the water to cool her burning face. In a small creek she met with a whole troop of little human children. They were naked, and dabbling about in the water. She wanted to play with them, but they flew away in great alarm, and there came a little black animal (she meant a dog, only she had never seen one before), who barked at her so tremendously that she was frightened, and sought to reach the open sea. But she should never forget the beautiful forests, the green hills, or the pretty children, who were able to swim in the water although they had no fish's tails.

The fourth sister was less daring. She remained in the midst of the sea, and maintained that it was most beautiful at that point, because from thence one could see for miles around, and the sky looked like a glass bell above one's head. She had seen ships, but only at a distance—they looked like sea-mews; and the waggish dolphins had thrown somersaults, and the large whales had squirted water through their nostrils, so that one might fancy there were hundreds of fountains all round.

It was now the fifth sister's turn. Her birthday was in the winter, therefore she saw what the others had not seen the first time they went up. The sea looked quite green, and huge icebergs were floating about; each looked like a pearl, she said, only larger than the churches built by human beings. They were of the oddest shapes, and glittered like diamonds. She had placed herself upon the largest of them, letting the wind play with her long hair, and all the vessels



ALL THE VESSELS SCUDDED PAST IN GREAT ALARM.

scudded past in great alarm, as though fearful of approaching the spot where she was sitting, but towards evening, the sky became overcast, it thundered and lightened, while the dark sea lifted up the huge icebergs on high, so that they were illuminated by the red flashes of the lightning. All the vessels reefed in their sails, and their passengers were panic struck, while she sat quietly on her floating block of ice and watched the blue lightning as it zig-zagged along the silent sea.

The first time that each of the sisters had successively risen to the surface of the water, they had been enchanted by the novelty and beauty of all they saw; but being now grown up, and at liberty to go above as often as they pleased, they had grown indifferent to such excursions. They longed to come back into the water, and at the end of a month they had all declared that it was far more beautiful down below, and that it was pleasanter to stay at home.

It frequently happened in the evening that the five sisters would entwine their arms, and rise up to the surface of the water all in a row. They had beautiful voices, far finer than any human being's, and when a storm was coming on, and they anticipated that a ship might sink, they swam before the vessel, and sang most sweetly of the delights to be found beneath the water, begging the seafarers not to be afraid of coming down below. But the sailors could not understand what they said, and mistook their words for the howling of the tempest, and they never saw all the fine things below, for if the ship sank the men were drowned, and their bodies alone reached the sea-king's palace.

When the sisters rose up arm-in-arm through the water, the youngest would stand alone, looking after them, and felt ready to cry; only mermaids have no tears, and therefore suffer all the more.

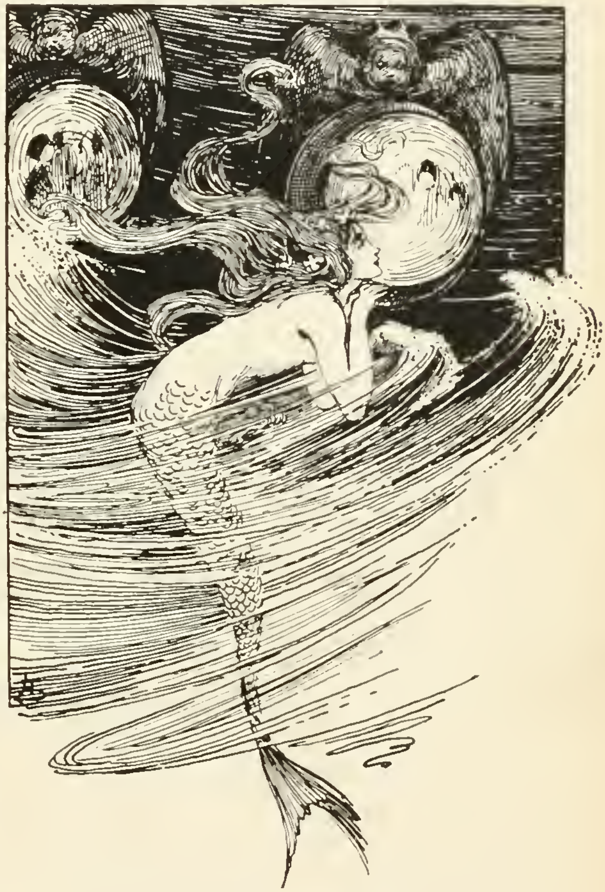
"How I wish I were fifteen!" said she. "I am sure I shall love the world above, and the beings that inhabit it."

At last she reached the age of fifteen.

"Well, now you are grown up!" said her grandmother, the widow of the late king. "So let me dress you like your sisters." And she placed in her hair a wreath of white lilies, every leaf of which was half a pearl; and the old dame ordered eight large oyster shells to be fastened to the princess's tail, to denote her high rank.

"But they hurt me so," said the little mermaid

"Pride must suffer pain," said the old lady.

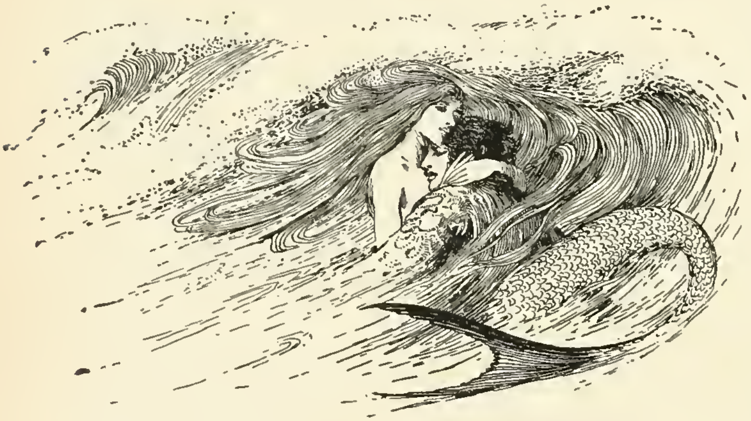


AS OFTEN AS THE WATER LIFTED HER UP SHE PEEPED IN THROUGH THE TRANSPARENT PANES.

Oh! how gladly would she have shaken off all this pomp and laid aside her heavy wreath—the red flowers in her garden adorned her far better—but she could not help herself. "Farewell!" cried she, rising as lightly as a bubble to the surface of the water.

The sun had just sunk as she raised her head above the waves, but the clouds were still pink, and fringed with gold; and through the fast vanishing rosy tints of the air beamed the evening in all its beauty. The atmosphere was mild and cool, and the sea quite calm. A large ship with three masts was lying on its surface; only a single sail was hoisted, for not a breeze was stirring, and the sailors were sitting all about in the rigging. There were musical instruments playing, and voices singing; and when the evening grew darker, hundreds of gay-coloured lanterns were lighted, which looked like the flags of all nations streaming through the air. The little mermaid swam close to the cabin window, and as often as the water lifted her up, she peeped in through the transparent panes, and saw a number of well-dressed persons. But the handsomest of all was the prince, with large, dark eyes; he could not be above sixteen, and it was *his* birthday that was being celebrated with such magnificence. The sailors danced upon deck, and when the young prince came up above a hundred rockets were let off, that lit the air till it was as bright as day, and so frightened the little mermaid that she dived under the water. But she soon popped out her head once more, when all the stars in heaven seemed to be falling down upon her. She had never seen such fireworks before; large suns were throwing out sparks, beautiful fiery fishes were darting through the blue air, and all these wonders were reflected in the calm sea below. The ship itself was thrown into such bright relief that every little cord was distinctly visible, and, of course, each person still more so. And how handsome the young prince looked, as he pressed the hands of those present and smiled, while the music resounded through that lovely night!

It was late. Still the little mermaid could not take her eyes off the ship or the handsome prince. The variegated lanterns were now extinguished, the rockets ceased to be let off, and no more cannons were fired; but there was a rumbling and a grumbling in the heart of the sea. Still she sat rocking up and down in the water, so as to peep into the cabin. But now the ship began to move faster, the sails were unfurled one after another, the waves ran higher, heavy clouds flitted across the sky, and flashes of lightning were seen in the distance. A tremendous storm seemed coming on, so the sailors reefed in the sails once more. The large ship kept pitching to and fro in its rapid course across the raging sea; the billows heaved, like so many gigantic black mountains, threatening to roll over the topmast, but the ship dived down like a swan between the high waves, and then rose again on the towering pinnacle of the waters. The little mermaid fancied this was a right pleasant mode of sailing, but the crew thought differently. The ship kept cracking and cracking, the thick planks gave way beneath the repeated lashings of the waves, a leak was sprung, the mast was broken right in twain like a reed, and the vessel drooped on one side, while the water kept filling the hold. The little mermaid now perceived that the crew were in danger, and she herself was obliged to take care not to be hurt by the beams and planks belonging to the ship that were dispersed upon the waters. For one moment it was so pitch dark that she could see nothing, but when a flash of lightning illumined the sky, and enabled her to discern distinctly all on board, she looked especially for the young prince, whom she perceived sinking into the water just as the ship burst asunder. She was then quite pleased at the thought of his coming down to her, till she reflected that human beings cannot live in water, and that he would be dead by the time he reached her father's castle. But die he must not, therefore she swam towards him through the planks and beams that were driven about on the billows, forgetting that they might crush her to atoms. She dived deep under the water, and then, rising again between the waves, she managed at length to reach the young prince, who was scarcely able to buffet any longer with the stormy sea. His arms and legs began to feel powerless, his beautiful eyes were closed, and he would have died had not the little mermaid come to his assistance. She held his head above the water, and then let the waves carry them whither they pleased.



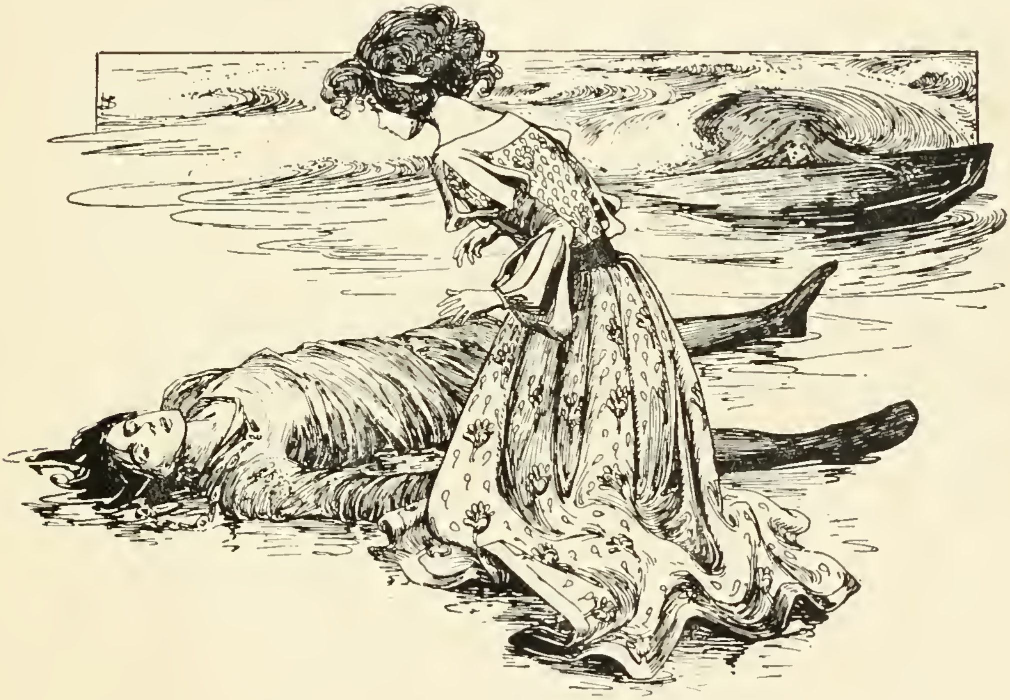
SHE HELD HIS HEAD ABOVE THE WATER, AND THEN LET THE WAVES CARRY THEM WHITHER THEY PLEASED.

Towards morning the storm had abated, but not a wreck of the vessel was to be seen. The sun rose red and beaming from the water, and seemed to infuse life into the prince's cheeks, but his eyes remained closed. The mermaid kissed his high, polished forehead, and stroked back his wet hair; she fancied he was like the marble statue in her garden, and she kissed him again, and wished that he might live.

They now came in sight of land, and she saw high blue mountains, on the tops of which the snow looked as dazzlingly white as though a flock of swans were lying there. Below, near the coast, were beautiful green forests, and in front stood a church or a convent—she did not rightly know which—but, at all events, it was a building. Citrons and China oranges grew in the garden, and tall palm-trees stood in front of the door. The sea formed a small bay at this spot, and the water, though very deep, was quite calm; so she swam with the handsome prince towards the cliff, where the delicate white sands had formed a heap, and here she laid him down, taking great care that his head should be placed higher than his body, and in the warm sunshine.

The bells now pealed from the large white building, and a number of girls came into the garden. The little mermaid then swam farther away and hid herself behind some high stones that rose out of the water, and covering her head and bosom with foam, so that no one could see her little countenance, she watched whether any one came to the poor prince's assistance.

It was not long before a young maiden approached the spot where he was lying. She appeared frightened at first, but it was only for a moment; and then she fetched a number of persons; and the mermaid saw that the prince came to life again, and that he smiled on all those around him. But he did not send her a smile, neither did he know she had saved him, so she felt quite afflicted; and when he was led into the large building she dived back into the water with a heavy heart and returned to her father's castle.



IT WAS NOT LONG BEFORE A YOUNG MAIDEN APPROACHED THE SPOT WHERE HE WAS LYING.

Silent and thoughtful as she had always been, she now grew still more so. Her sisters inquired what she had seen the first time she went above, but she did not tell them.

Many an evening, and many a morning, did she rise up to the spot where she had left the prince. She saw the fruit in the garden grow ripe, and then she saw it gathered; she saw the snow melt away from the summits of the high mountains, but she did not see the prince; and each time she returned home more sorrowful than ever. Her only consolation was to sit in her little garden and to fling her arm round the beauteous marble statue that was like the prince; but she ceased to tend her flowers, and they grew like a wilderness all over the paths, entwining their long stems and leaves with the branches of the trees, so that it was quite dark beneath their shade.

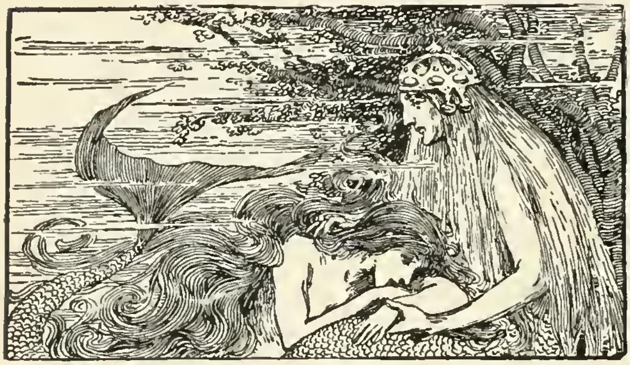
At length she could resist no longer, and opened her heart to one of her sisters, from whom all the others immediately learned her secret, though they told it to no one else, except to a couple of other mermaids, who divulged it to nobody, except to their most intimate friends. One of these happened to know who the prince was. She, too, had seen the gala on ship-board, and informed them whence he came, and where his kingdom lay.

"Come, little sister," said the other princesses; and, entwining their arms, they rose up in a long row out of the sea at the spot where they knew the prince's palace stood.

This was built of bright yellow, shining stone, with a broad flight of marble steps, the last of which reached down into the sea. Magnificent golden cupolas rose above the roof, and marble statues, closely imitating life, were placed between the pillars that surrounded the edifice. One could see, through the transparent panes of the large windows, right into the magnificent rooms, fitted with costly silk curtains and splendid hangings, and ornamented with large pictures on all the walls; so that it was a pleasure to look at them. In the middle of the principal room, a large fountain threw up its sparkling jets as high as the glass cupola in the ceiling, through which the sun shone down upon the water, and on the beautiful plants growing in the wide basin that contained it.

Now that she knew where he lived, she spent many an evening, and many a night, on the neighbouring water. She swam much nearer the shore than any of the others had ventured to do; nay, she even went up the narrow canal, under the handsome marble balcony that threw its long shadow over the water. Here she would sit, and gaze at the young prince, who thought himself quite alone in the bright moonshine.

Many an evening did she see him sailing in his pretty boat, adorned with flags, and enjoying music: then she would listen from amongst the green reeds; and if the wind happened to seize hold of her long silvery white veil, those who saw it took it to be a swan spreading out his wings.


"YOU MUST NOT THINK ABOUT THAT," SAID THE OLD DAME.

Many a night, too, when fishermen were spreading their nets by torchlight, she heard them speaking highly of the young prince; and she rejoiced that she had saved his life, when he was tossed about, half dead, on the waves. And she remembered how his head had rested on her bosom, and how heartily she had kissed him—but of all this he knew nothing, and he could not even dream about her.

She soon grew to be more and more fond of human beings, and to long more and more fervently to be able to walk about amongst them, for their world appeared to her far larger and more beautiful than her own. They could fly across the sea upon ships, and scale mountains that towered above the clouds; and the lands they possessed—their fields and their forests—stretched away far beyond the reach of her sight.

There was such a deal that she wanted to learn, but her sisters were not able to answer all her questions; therefore she applied to her old grandmother, who was well acquainted with the upper world, which she called, very correctly, the lands above the sea.

"If human beings do not get drowned," asked the little mermaid, "can they live for ever? Do not they die, as we do here in the sea?"

"Yes," said the ancient dame, "they must die as well as we; and the term of their life is even shorter than ours. We can live to be three hundred years old; but when we cease to be here, we shall only be changed into foam, and are not even buried below among those we love. Our souls are not immortal. We shall never enter upon a new life. We are like the green reed, that can never flourish again when it has once been cut through. Human beings, on the contrary, have a soul that lives eternally—yea, even after the body has been committed to the earth—and that rises up through the clear pure air to the bright stars above! Like as we rise out of the water to look at the haunts of men, so do they rise to unknown and favoured regions, that we shall never be privileged to see."

"And why have not we an immortal soul?" asked the little mermaid sorrowfully. "I would willingly give all the hundreds of years I may have to live, to be a human being but for one day, and to have the hope of sharing in the joys of the heavenly world."

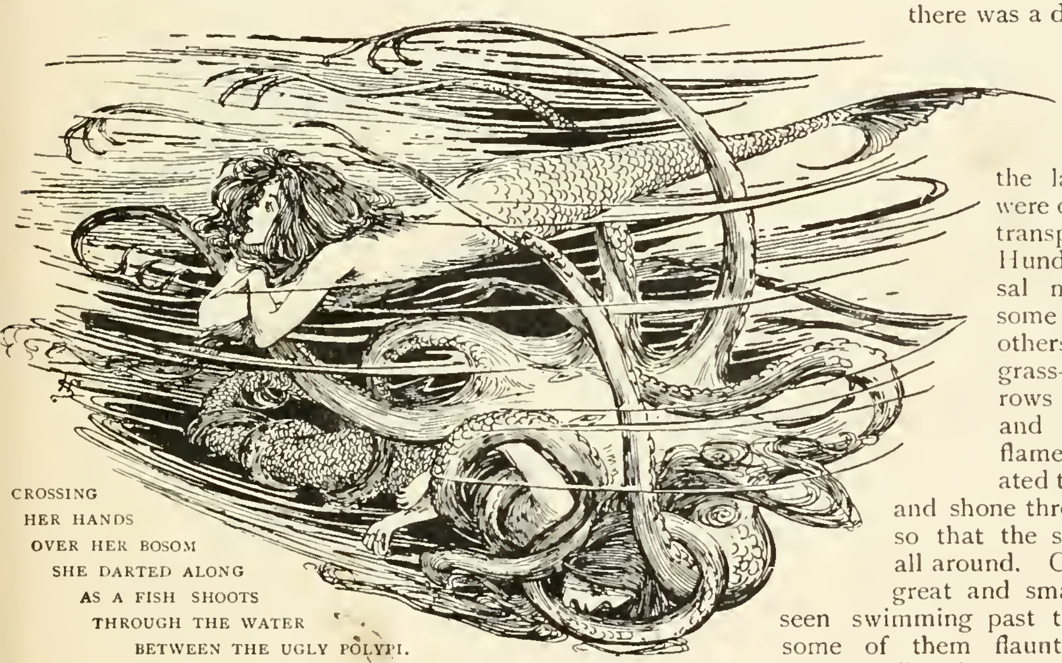
"You must not think about that," said the old dame. "We feel we are much happier and better than the human race above."

"So I shall die, and be driven about like foam on the sea, and cease to hear the music of the waves, and to see the beautiful flowers, and the red sun? Is there nothing I can do to obtain an immortal soul?"

"No," said the old sea-queen; "unless a human being loved you so dearly that you were more to him than either father or mother; if all his thoughts and his love were centred in you, and he allowed the priest to lay his right hand in yours, promising to be faithful to you here and hereafter: then would his soul glide into your body, and you would obtain a share in the happiness awaiting human beings. He would give you a soul without forfeiting his own. But this will never happen! Your fish's tail, which is a beauty amongst us sea-folk, is thought a deformity on earth, because they know no better. It is necessary there to have two stout props, that they call legs, in order to be beautiful!"

The little mermaid sighed as she cast a glance at her fish's tail.

"Let us be merry," said the old dame; "let us jump and hop about during the three hundred years that we have to live—which is really quite enough, in all conscience. We shall then be all the more disposed to rest at a later period. To-night we shall have a court ball."



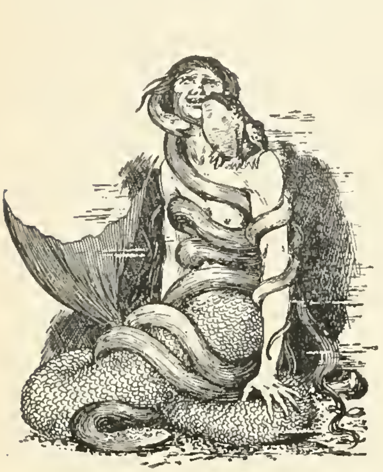
CROSSING HER HANDS OVER HER BOSOM SHE DARTED ALONG AS A FISH SHOOTS THROUGH THE WATER BETWEEN THE UGLY POLYPI.

On these occasions there was a display of magnificence such as we never see upon earth. The walls and the ceiling of the large ball-room were of thick, though transparent glass. Hundreds of colossal mussel-shells—some of a deep red, others as green as grass—were hung in rows on each side, and contained blue flames, that illuminated the whole room, and shone through the walls, so that the sea was lighted all around. Countless fishes, great and small, were to be seen swimming past the glass walls, some of them flaunting in scarlet scales, while others sparkled like liquid gold or silver.

Through the ball-room flowed a wide stream, on whose surface the mermen and mermaids danced to their own sweet singing. Human beings have no such voices. The little mermaid sang the sweetest of them all, and the whole court applauded with their hands and tails; and for a moment she felt delighted, for she knew that she had the loveliest voice ever heard upon earth or upon the sea. But her thoughts soon turned once more to the upper world, for she could not long forget either the handsome prince or her grief at not having an immortal soul like his. She, therefore, stole out of her father's palace, where all within was song and festivity, and sat down sadly in her own little garden. Here she heard a bugle sounding through the water.

"Now," thought she, "he is surely sailing about up above—he who incessantly fills all my thoughts, and to whose hands I would fain entrust the happiness of my existence. I will venture everything to win him and to obtain an immortal soul. While my sisters are dancing yonder in my father's castle, I will go to the sea-witch, who has always frightened me hitherto, but now, perhaps, she can advise and help me."

The little mermaid then left her garden, and repaired to the rushing whirlpool, behind which the sorceress lived. She had never gone that way before. Neither flowers nor sea-grass grew there; and nothing but bare, grey, sandy ground led to the whirlpool, where the waters kept eddying like waving mill-wheels, dragging everything they clutched hold of into the fathomless depth below. Between these whirlpools, that might have crushed her in their rude grasp, was the mermaid forced to pass to reach the dominions of the sea-witch; and even here, during a good part of the way, there was no other road than across a sheet of warm, bubbling mire, which the witch called her turf-common. At the back of this lay her house, in the midst of a most singular forest. Its trees and bushes were polypi—half animal, half plant—they looked like hundred-headed serpents growing out of the ground; the branches were long, slimy arms, with fingers like flexible worms, and they could move every joint from the root to the tip. They laid fast hold of whatever they could snatch from the sea, and never yielded it up again. The little mermaid was so frightened at the sight of them that her heart beat with fear, and she was fain to turn back; but then she thought of the prince, and of the soul that human beings possessed, and she took courage. She knotted up her long, flowing hair, that the polypi might not seize hold of her locks; and, crossing her hands over her bosom, she darted along, as a fish shoots through the water, between the ugly polypi, that stretched forth their flexible arms and fingers behind her. She perceived how each of them retained what it had seized, with hundreds of little arms, as strong as iron clasps. Human beings, who had died at sea and had sunk below, looked like white skeletons in the arms of the polypi. They clutched rudders, too, and chests, and skeletons of animals belonging to the earth, and even a little mermaid whom they had caught and stifled—and this appeared to her, perhaps, the most shocking of all.



WITHIN SAT THE SEA-WITCH, FEEDING A TOAD FROM HER MOUTH.

She now approached a vast swamp in the forest, where large, fat water-snakes were wallowing in the mire and displaying their ugly whitish-yellow bodies. In the midst of this loathsome spot stood a house, built of the bones of shipwrecked human beings, and within sat the sea-witch, feeding a toad from her mouth, just as people amongst us give a little canary-bird a lump of sugar to eat. She called the nasty fat water-snakes her little chicks, and let them creep all over her bosom.

"I know what you want!" said the sea-witch. "It is very stupid of you, but you shall have your way, as it will plunge you into misfortune, my fair princess. You want to be rid of your fish's tail, and to have a couple of props like those human beings have to walk about upon, in order that the young prince may fall in love with you, and that you may obtain his hand and an immortal soul into the bargain!" And then the old witch laughed so loud and so repulsively that the toad and the snakes fell to the ground, where they lay wriggling about. "You come just at the nick of time," added the witch, "for to-morrow, by sunrise, I should no longer be able to help you till another year had flown past. I will prepare you a potion; and you must swim ashore with it to-morrow, before sunrise, and then sit down and drink it. Your tail will then disappear, and shrivel up into what human beings call neat legs. But mind, it will hurt you as much as if a sharp sword were thrust through you. Everybody that sees you will say you are the most beautiful mortal ever seen. You will retain the floating elegance of your gait: no dancer will move so lightly as you, but every step you take will be like treading upon such sharp knives that you would think your blood must flow. If you choose to put up with sufferings like these, I have the power to help you."

"I do," said the little mermaid, in a trembling voice, as she thought of the prince and of an immortal soul.

"But bethink you well," said the witch; "if once you obtain a human form, you can never be a mermaid again! You will never be able to dive down into the water to your sisters or return to your father's palace; and if you should fail in winning the prince's love to the degree of his forgetting both father and mother for your sake, and loving you with his whole soul, and bidding the priest join your hands in marriage, then you will never obtain an immortal soul! And the very day after he will have married another, your heart will break, and you will dissolve into the foam on the billows."

"I am resolved," said the little mermaid, who had turned as pale as death.

"But you must pay me my dues," said the witch, "and it is no small matter I require. You have the loveliest voice of all the inhabitants of the deep, and you reckon upon its tones to charm him into loving you. Now, you must give me this beautiful voice. I choose to have the best of all you possess in exchange for my valuable potion. For I must mix my own blood with it, that it may prove as sharp as a two-edged sword."

"But if you take away my voice," said the little mermaid, "what have I left?"

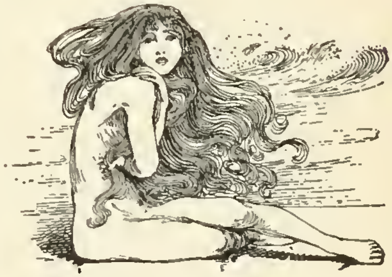
"Your lovely form," said the witch, "your buoyant carriage, and your expressive eyes. With these you surely can befool a man's heart. Well? Has your courage melted away? Come, put out your little tongue, and let me cut it off for my fee, and you shall have the valuable potion."

"So be it," said the little mermaid; and the witch put her cauldron on the fire to prepare the potion. "Cleanliness is a virtue!" quoth she, scouring the cauldron with the snakes that she had tied into a knot; after which she pricked her own breast, and let her black blood trickle down into the vessel. The steam rose up in such fanciful shapes that no one could have looked at them without a shudder. The witch kept flinging fresh materials into the cauldron every moment, and when it began to simmer it was like the wailings of a crocodile. At length the potion was ready, and it looked like the purest spring water.

"Here it is," said the witch, cutting off the little mermaid's tongue; so now she was dumb, and could neither sing nor speak.

"If the polypi should seize hold of you on your return through my forest," said the witch, "you need only sprinkle a single drop of this potion over them, and their arms and fingers will be shivered to a thousand pieces." But the little mermaid had no need of this talisman; the polypi drew back in alarm from her on perceiving the dazzling potion that shined in her hand like a twinkling star. So she crossed rapidly through the forest, the swamp, and the raging whirlpool.

She saw her father's palace—the torches were now extinguished in the large ball-room—and she knew the whole family were asleep within, but she did not dare venture to go and seek them, now that she was dumb and was about to leave them for ever. Her heart seemed ready to burst with anguish. She stole into the garden and plucked a flower from each of her sisters' flower-beds, kissed her hand a thousand times to the palace, and then rose up through the blue waters.


WHEN THE SUN ROSE OVER THE SEA SHE AWOKE, AND FELT A SHARP PANG.

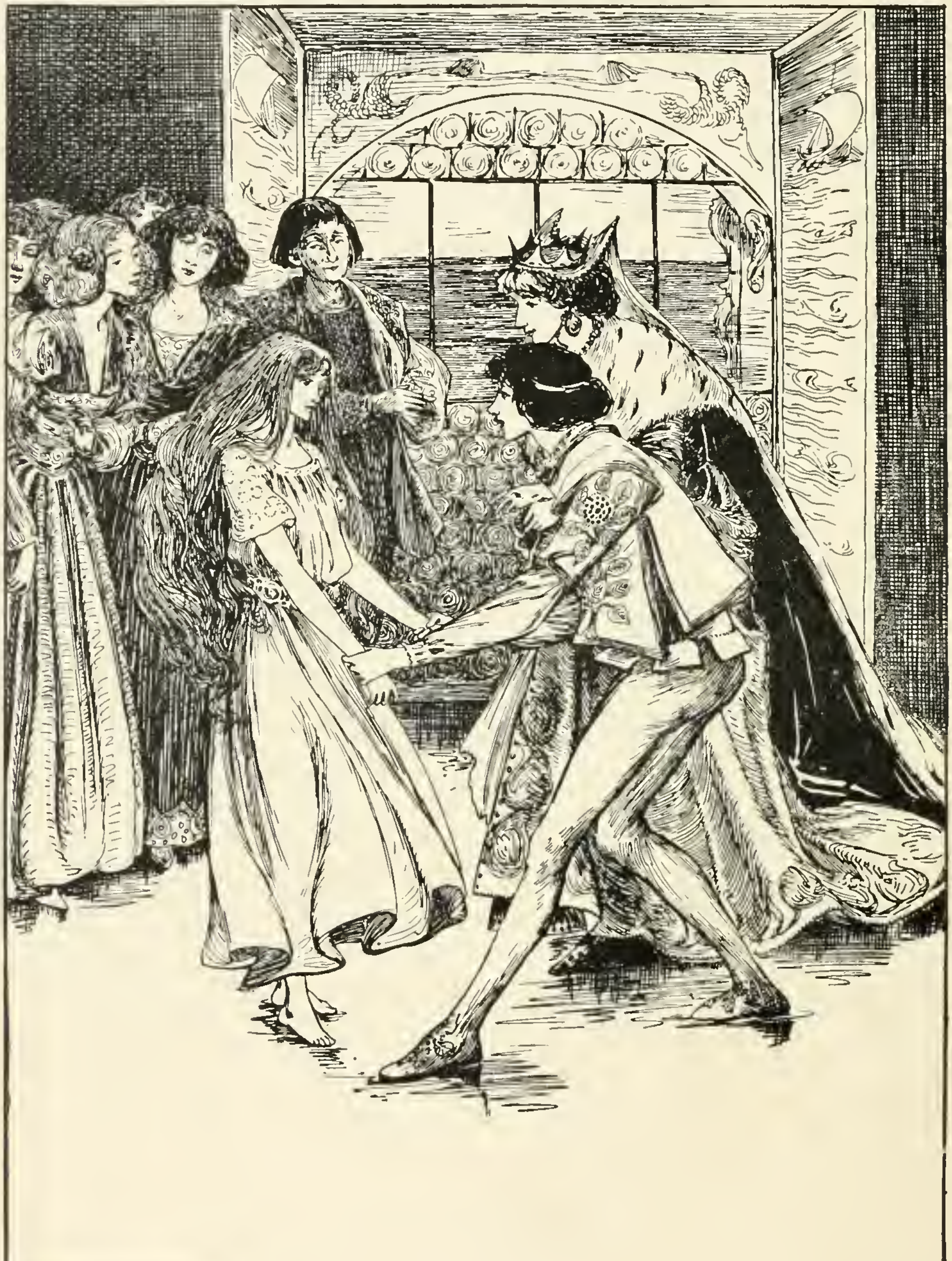
The sun had not yet risen when she saw the prince's castle and reached the magnificent marble steps. The moon shone brightly. The little mermaid drank the sharp and burning potion, and it seemed as if a two-edged sword was run through her delicate frame. She fainted away, and remained apparently lifeless. When the sun rose over the sea she awoke, and felt a sharp pang; but just before her stood the handsome young prince. He gazed at her so intently with his coal-black eyes that she cast hers to the ground, and now perceived that her fish's tail had disappeared, and that she had a pair of the neatest little white legs that a maiden could desire. Only, having no clothes on, she was obliged to enwrap herself in her long, thick hair. The prince inquired who she was, and how she had come thither; but she could only look at him with her mild but sorrowful deep blue eyes, for speak she could not. He then took her by the hand, and led her into the palace. Every step she took was, as the witch had warned her it would be, like treading on the points of needles and sharp knives; but she bore it willingly, and, hand in hand with the prince, she glided in as lightly as a soap-bubble, so that he, as well as everybody else, marvelled at her lovely lightsome gait.

She was now dressed in costly robes of silk and muslin, and was the most beautiful of all the inmates of the palace; but she was dumb, and could neither sing nor speak. Handsome female slaves, attired in silk and gold, came and sang before the prince and his royal parents; and one of them happening to sing more beautifully than all the others, the prince clapped his hands and smiled. This afflicted the little mermaid. She knew that she herself had sung much more exquisitely, and thought, "Oh, did he but know that to be near him I sacrificed my voice to all eternity!"

The female slaves now performed a variety of elegant, aërial-looking dances to the sound of the most delightful music. The little mermaid then raised her beautiful white arms, stood on the tips of her toes, and floated across the floor in such a way as no one had ever danced before. Every motion revealed some fresh beauty, and her eyes appealed still more directly to the heart than the singing of the slaves had done.

Everybody was enchanted, but most of all the prince, who called her his little foundling; and she danced on and on, though every time her foot touched the floor she felt as if she were treading on sharp knives. The prince declared that he would never part with her, and she obtained leave to sleep on a velvet cushion before his door.

He had her dressed in male attire, that she might accompany him on horseback. They then rode together through the perfumed forests, where the green boughs touched their shoulders, and



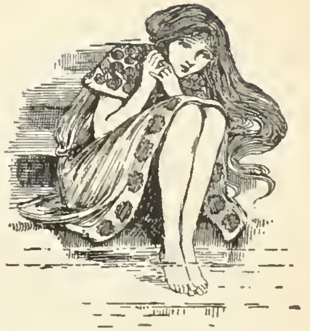
EVERYBODY WAS ENCHANTED, BUT MOST OF ALL THE PRINCE, WHO CALLED HER HIS LITTLE FOUNDLING.

the little birds sang amongst the cool leaves. She climbed up mountains by the prince's side; and though her tender feet bled so that others perceived it, she only laughed at her sufferings, and followed him till they could see the clouds rolling beneath them like a flock of birds bound for some distant land.

At night, when others slept throughout the prince's palace, she would go and sit on the broad marble steps, for it cooled her burning feet to bathe them in the sea water; and then she thought of those below the deep.

One night her sisters rose up arm in arm, and sang so mournfully as they glided over the waters. She then made them a sign, when they recognised her, and told her how deeply she had afflicted them all. After that they visited her every night; and once she perceived at a great distance her aged grandmother, who had not come up above the surface of the sea for many years, and the sea-king, with his crown on his head. They stretched out their arms to her, but they did not venture so near the shore as her sisters.

Each day she grew to love the prince more fondly; and he loved her just as one loves a dear, good child. But as to choosing her for his queen, such an idea never entered his head; yet, unless she became his wife, she would not obtain an immortal soul, and would melt to foam on the morrow of his wedding another.


SHE WOULD GO AND SIT ON THE BROAD MARBLE STEPS, FOR IT COOLED HER BURNING FEET TO BATHE THEM IN THE SEA WATER.

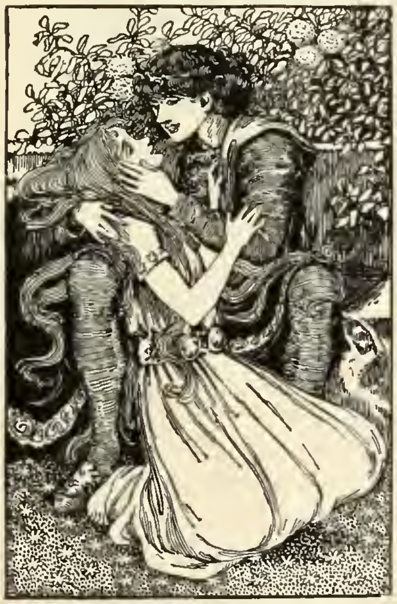
"Don't you love me the best of all?" would the little mermaid's eyes seem to ask, when he embraced her and kissed her fair forehead.

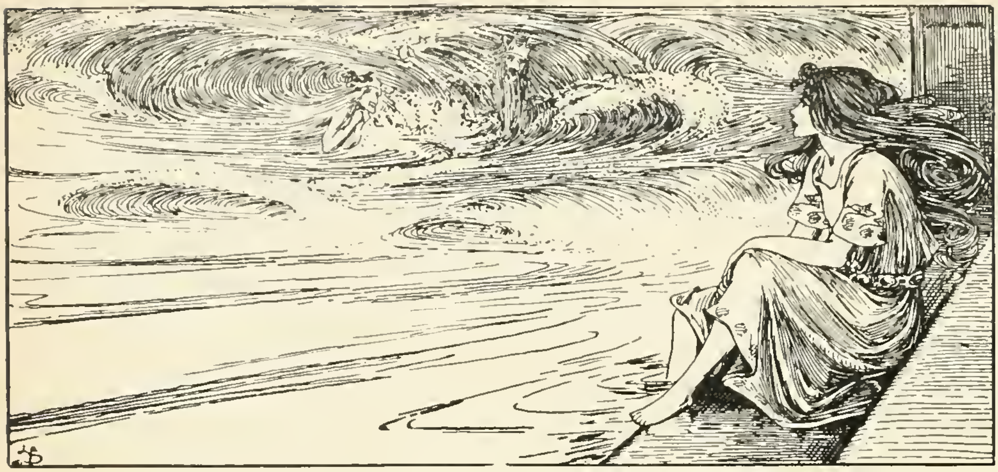
"Yes, I love you best," said the prince, "for you have the best heart of any. You are the most devoted to me, and you resemble a young maiden whom I once saw, but whom I shall never meet again. I was on board a ship that sank; the billows cast me near a holy temple, where several young maids were performing divine service; the youngest of them found me on the shore and saved my life. I saw her only twice. She would be the only one that I could love in this world; but your features are like hers, and you have almost driven her image out of my soul. She belongs to the holy temple; and, therefore, my good star has sent you to me—and we will never part."

"Alas! he knows not that it was I who saved his life!" thought the little mermaid. "I bore him across the sea to the wood where stands the holy temple, and I sat beneath the foam to watch whether any human beings came to help him. I saw the pretty girl whom he loves better than he does me." And the mermaid heaved a deep sigh, for tears she had none to shed. "He says the maiden belongs to the holy temple, and she will, therefore, never return to the world. They will not meet again while I am by his side and see him every day. I will take care of him, and love him, and sacrifice my life to him."

But now came a talk of the prince being about to marry, and to obtain for his wife the beautiful daughter of a neighbouring king; and that was why he was fitting out such a magnificent vessel. The prince was travelling ostensibly on a mere visit to his neighbour's estates, but in reality to see the king's daughter. He was to be accompanied by a numerous retinue. The little mermaid shook her head and smiled. She knew the prince's thoughts better than the others did. "I must travel," he had said to her. "I must see this beautiful princess, because my parents require it of me; but they will not force me to bring her home as my bride. I cannot love her. She will not resemble the beautiful maid in the temple whom you are like; and if I were compelled to choose a bride, it should sooner be you, my dumb foundling, with those expressive eyes of yours." And he kissed her rosy mouth, and played with her long hair, and rested his head against her heart, which beat high with hopes of human felicity and of an immortal soul.

"You are not afraid of the sea, my dumb child, are you?" said he, as they stood on the magnificent vessel that was to carry them to the neighbouring king's dominions. And he talked to her about tempests and calm, of the singular fishes to found in the deep, and of the wonderful things the divers


HE KISSED HER ROSY MOUTH AND PLAYED WITH HER LONG HAIR.



GAZED THROUGH THE CLEAR WATERS, AND FANCIED SHE SAW HER FATHER'S PALACE.

saw below; and she smiled, for she knew better than any one else what was in the sea below.

During the moonlit night, when all were asleep on board, not even excepting the helmsman at his rudder, she sat on deck, and gazed through the clear waters, and fancied she saw her father's palace. High above it stood her aged grandmother, with her silver crown on her head, looking up intently at the keel of the ship. Then her sisters rose up to the surface, and gazed at her mournfully, and wrung their white hands. She made a sign to them, smiled, and would fain have told them that she was happy and well off; but the cabin-boy approached, and the sisters dived beneath the waves, leaving him to believe that the white forms he thought he descried were only the foam upon the waters.

Next morning the ship came into port, at the neighbouring king's splendid capital. The bells were all set a-ringing, trumpets sounded flourishes from high turrets, and soldiers, with flying colours and shining bayonets, stood ready to welcome the stranger. Every day brought some fresh entertainment: balls and feasts succeeded each other. But the princess was not yet there; for she had been brought up, people said, in a far distant, holy temple, where she had acquired all manner of royal virtues. At last she came.

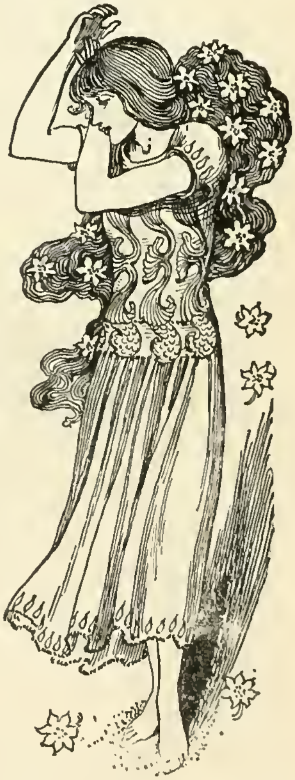
The little mermaid was curious to judge of her beauty, and she was obliged to acknowledge to herself that she had never seen a lovelier face. Her skin was delicate and transparent, and beneath her long, dark lashes sparkled a pair of sincere, dark blue eyes.

"It is you!" cried the prince—"you who saved me, when I lay like a lifeless corpse upon the shore!" And he folded his blushing bride in his arms. "Oh, I am too happy!" said he to the little mermaid: "my fondest dream has come to pass. You will rejoice at my happiness, for you wish me better than any of them." And the little mermaid kissed his hand, and felt already as if her heart was about to break. His wedding-morning would bring her death, and she would be then changed to foam upon the sea.

All the church-bells were ringing, and the heralds rode through the streets, and proclaimed the approaching nuptials. Perfumed oil was burning in costly silver lamps on all the altars. The priests were swinging their censers; while the bride and bridegroom joined their hands, and received the bishop's blessing. The little mermaid, dressed in silk and gold, held up the bride's train; but her ears did not hear the solemn music, neither did her eyes behold the ceremony: she thought of the approaching gloom of death, and of all she had lost in this world.

That same evening the bride and bridegroom went on board. The cannons were roaring, the banners were streaming, and a costly tent of gold and purple, lined with beautiful cushions, had been prepared on deck for the reception of the bridal pair.

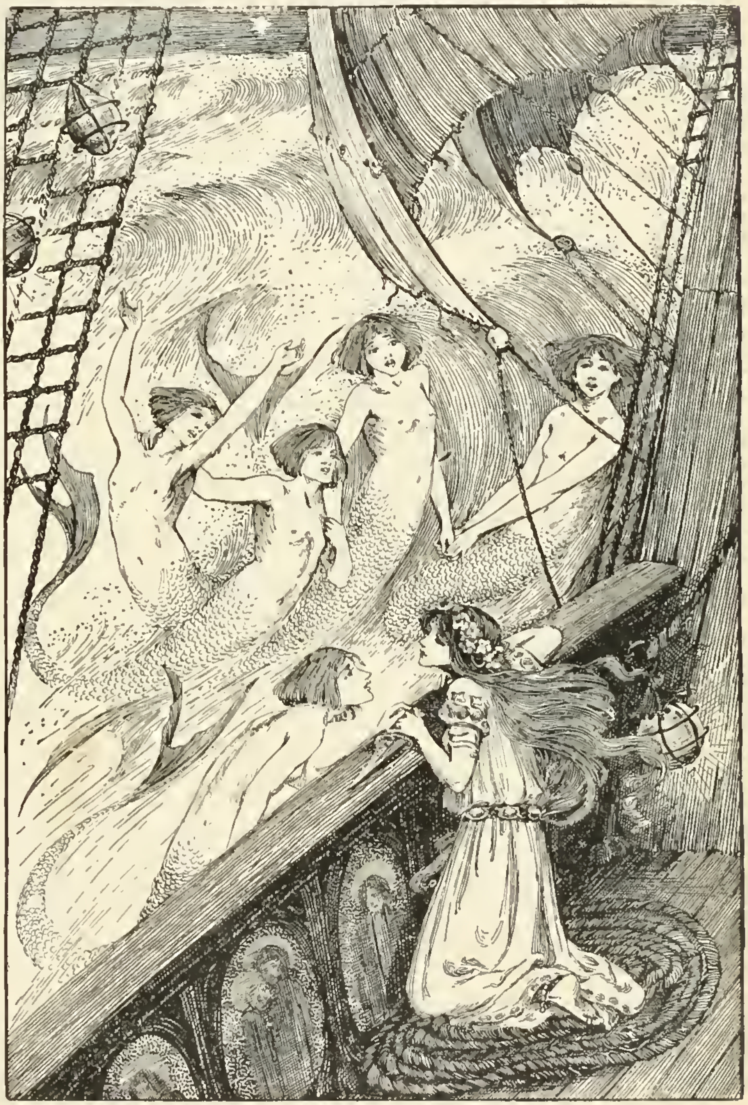
The vessel then set sail, with a favourable wind, and glided smoothly along the calm sea.



SHE WAS FAIN TO LAUGH AND DANCE, THOUGH THE THOUGHTS OF DEATH WERE IN HER HEART.

When it grew dark, a number of variegated lamps were lighted, and the crew danced merrily on deck. The little mermaid could not help remembering her first visit to the earth, when she witnessed similar festivities and magnificence; and she twirled round in the dance, half poised in the air, like a swallow when pursued; and all present cheered her in ecstasies, for never had she danced so enchantingly before. Her tender feet felt the sharp pangs of knives; but she heeded it not, for a sharper pang had shot through her heart. She knew that this was the last evening she should ever be able to see him for whom she had left both her relations and her home, sacrificed her beautiful voice, and daily suffered most excruciating pains, without his having even dreamed that such was the case. It was the last night on which she might breathe the same air as he, and gaze on the deep sea and the starry sky. An eternal night, unenlivened by either thoughts or dreams, now awaited her; for she had no soul, and could never now obtain one. Yet all was joy and gaiety on board till long past midnight; and she was fain to laugh and dance, though the thoughts of death were in her heart. The prince kissed his beautiful bride, and she played with his black locks; and then they went, arm in arm, to rest beneath the splendid tent.

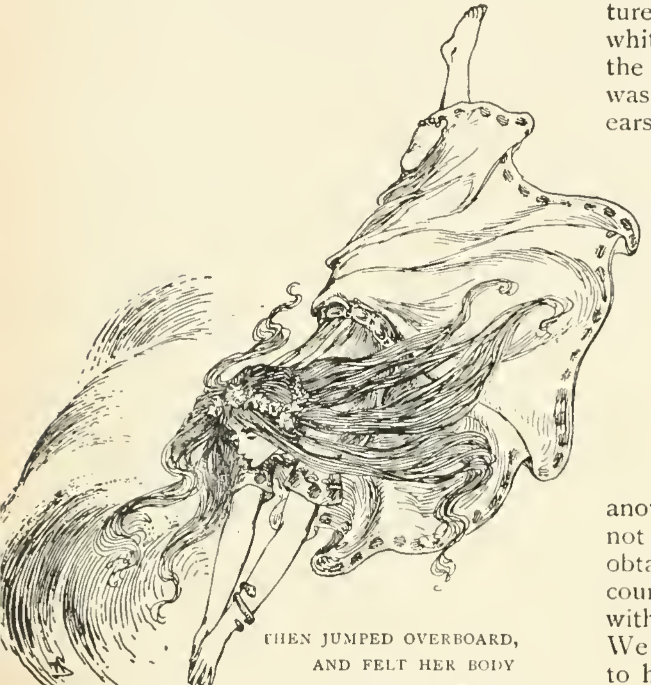
All was now quiet on board; the steersman only was sitting at the helm, as the little mermaid leaned her white arms on the edge of the vessel, and looked towards the east for the first blush of morning. The very first sunbeam, she knew, must kill her. She then saw her sisters rising out of the flood. They were as pale as herself, and their long and beautiful locks were no longer streaming to the winds, for they had been cut off.



SHE THEN SAW HER SISTERS RISING OUT OF THE FLOOD. THEY WERE AS PALE AS HERSELF, AND THEIR LONG AND BEAUTIFUL LOCKS WERE NO LONGER STREAMING TO THE WINDS, FOR THEY HAD BEEN CUT OFF.

"We gave them to the witch," said they, "to obtain help, that you might not die to-night. She gave us a knife in exchange—and a sharp one it is, as you may see. Now, before sunrise, you must plunge it into the prince's heart; and when his warm blood shall besprinkle your feet, they will again close up into a fish's tail, and you will be a mermaid once more, and can come down to us, and live out your three hundred years, before you turn into inanimate, salt foam. Haste, then! He or you must die before sunrise! Our old grandmother has fretted till her white hair has fallen off, as ours has under the witch's scissors. Haste, then! Do you not perceive those red streaks in the sky? In a few minutes the sun will rise, and then you must die!" And they then fetched a deep, deep sigh, as they sank down into the waves.

The little mermaid lifted the scarlet curtain of the tent, and beheld the fair bride resting her head on the prince's breast; and she bent down and kissed his beautiful forehead, then looked up at the heavens, where the rosy dawn grew brighter and brighter; then gazed on the sharp knife, and again turned her eyes towards the prince, who was calling his bride by her name in his sleep. She alone filled his thoughts, and the mermaid's fingers clutched the knife instinctively—but in another moment she hurled the blade far away into the waves, that gleamed redly where it fell, as though drops of blood were gurgling up from the water. She gave the prince one last, dying look, and then jumped overboard, and felt her body dissolving into foam.



THEN JUMPED OVERBOARD, AND FELT HER BODY DISSOLVING INTO FOAM.

The sun now rose out of the sea; its beams threw a kindly warmth upon the cold foam, and the little mermaid did not experience the pangs of death. She saw the bright sun, and above were floating hundreds of transparent, beautiful creatures; she could still catch a glimpse of the ship's white sails, and of the red clouds in the sky, across the swarms of these lovely beings. Their language was melody, but too ethereal to be heard by human ears, just as no human eye can discern their forms. Though without wings, their lightness poised them in the air. The little mermaid saw that she had a body like theirs, that kept rising higher and higher from out the foam.

"Where am I?" asked she! and her voice sounded like that of her companions—so ethereal that no earthly music could give an adequate idea of its sweetness.

"Amongst the daughters of the air!" answered they. "A mermaid has not an immortal soul, and cannot obtain one, unless she wins the love of some human being—her eternal welfare depends on the will of another. But the daughters of the air, although not possessing an immortal soul by nature, can obtain one by their good deeds. We fly to warm countries, and fan the burning atmosphere, laden with pestilence, that destroys the sons of man. We diffuse the perfume of flowers through the air to heal and to refresh. When we have striven for three hundred years to do all the good in our power, we then obtain an immortal soul, and share in the eternal happiness of the human race. You, poor little mermaid! have striven with your whole heart like ourselves. You have suffered and endured, and have raised yourself into an aërial spirit, and now your own good works may obtain you an immortal soul after the lapse of three hundred years."

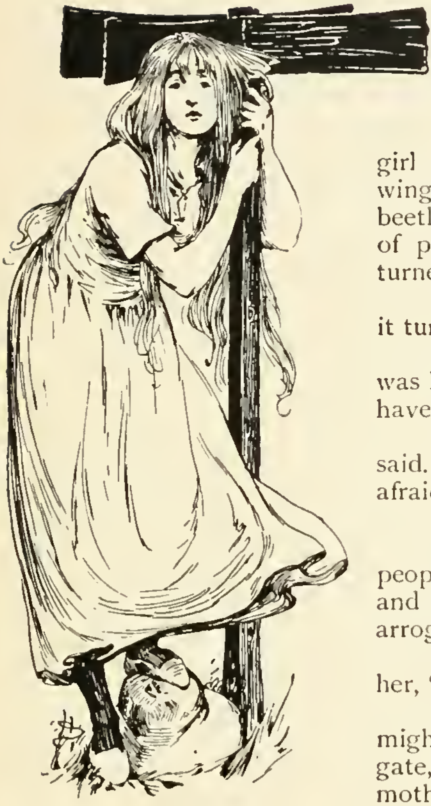
And the little mermaid lifted her brightening eyes to the sun, and for the first time she felt them filled with tears. All was now astir in the ship, and she could see the prince and his beautiful bride looking for her, and then gazing sorrowfully at the pearly foam, as though they knew that she had cast herself into the waves. She then kissed the bride's forehead, and fanned the prince, unseen by either of them, and then mounted, together with the other children of the air, on the rosy cloud that was sailing through the atmosphere.

"Thus shall we glide into the Kingdom of Heaven, after the lapse of three hundred years," said she.

"We may reach it sooner," whispered one of the daughters of the air. "We enter unseen the dwellings of man, and for each day on which we have met with a good child, who is the joy of his parents, and deserving of their love, the Almighty shortens the time of our trial. The child little thinks, when we fly through the room, and smile for joy at such a discovery, that a year is deducted from the three hundred we have to live. But when we see an ill-behaved or naughty child, we shed tears of sorrow, and every tear adds a day to the time of our probation."

* * *

The Girl who Trod on the Loaf



THE story of the girl who trod on the loaf lest she should soil her shoes, and of what happened to her, must be familiar to you. It has been both written and printed.

She was a poor child, but proud and arrogant; there was a poor foundation in her, as they say. As quite a little girl it was her one delight to get hold of flies and pull off their wings, so that they could only crawl. She took cockchafers and beetles, stuck them on needles, then held a green leaf or a little piece of paper to their feet, and the poor creatures held fast to it, and turned it about to get off the needle.

"Now the cockchafer is reading!" said little Inger; "see how it turns the leaf!"

As she grew bigger she became worse, instead of better; but she was handsome, and that was her misfortune, for otherwise she would have been more often chastised than she was.

"Your head will meet with some hard blow!" her own mother said. "You have often as a child trodden on my apron, and I am afraid that when you are older you will tread on my heart."

And certainly she did so.

She now came out into the country to be a servant to some people of rank; they treated her as if she had been their own child, and she was dressed as such. She looked well, and grew yet more arrogant.

When she had been out about a twelvemonth, her master said to her, "You ought to go and visit your parents, little Inger."

And she went; but it was in order to show herself, that they might see how fine she had grown. But when she came to the town gate, and saw girls and young men gossiping at the pond, while her mother sat on a stone hard by, with a bundle of firewood, which she had gathered in the forest, and rested herself, then Inger turned away; for she was ashamed that she, with all her fine clothes, should have for her mother a ragged woman who gathered sticks. It was not because she pitied her that she turned away; she was only vexed.

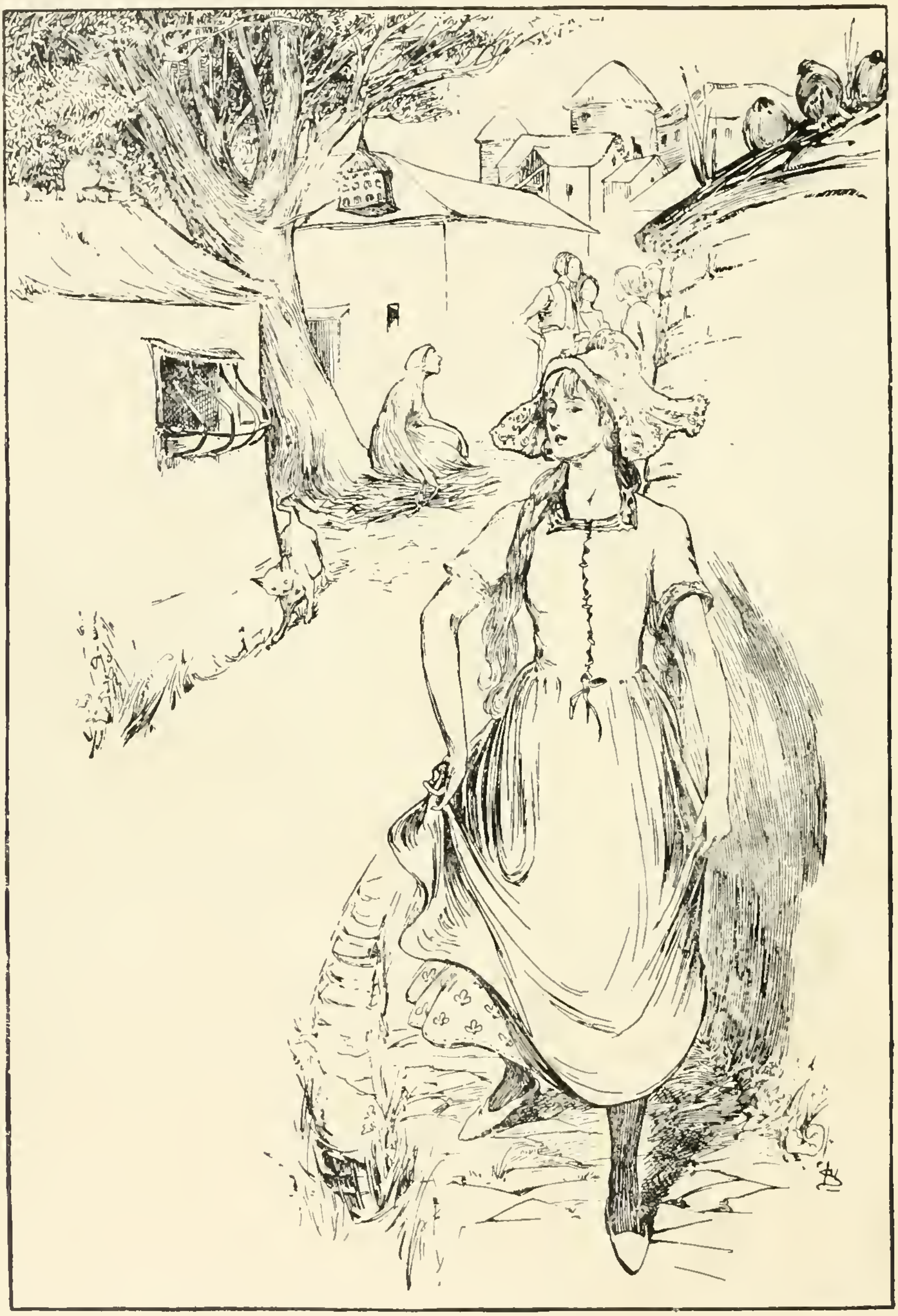
And now half a year passed by.

"You ought to go home one day and call on your old parents, little Inger," said her mistress. "Here is a large loaf of wheaten bread you can take to them; they will be pleased to see you."

And Inger put on her best clothes and her new shoes, and she raised her skirts and walked carefully, to keep her feet clean and smart; and I don't blame her for that. But when she came where the path crosses some boggy ground, and water and mud stood a long way in the road, then she flung the loaf into the mud, that she might step on it and come over dry-shod; then, when she stood with one foot on the loaf and raised the other, the loaf sank with her deeper and deeper: she was quite lost to sight, and there was only a black, bubbling pool.

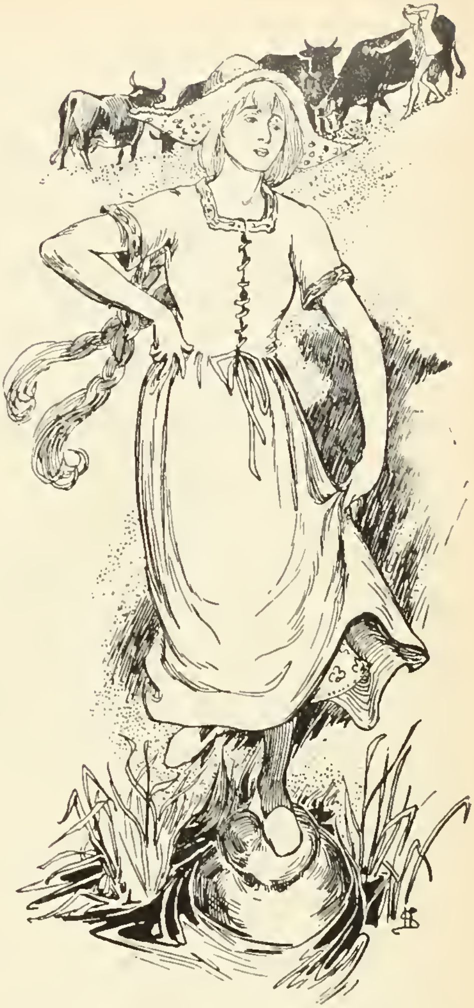
That is the story.

Where had she gone to? She went down to the bog-wife, who was brewing. The bog-wife is aunt to the elf-maidens, who are pretty well known; songs have been written about them, and they have been painted; but about the bog-wife people only know that when the meadows steam in the summer it is because the bog-wife is brewing. It was down into her brewery that Inger sank, and there is no one who can stand that place long. A cesspool is a bright and splendid apartment compared with the bog-wife's brewery! Every vat stinks so that human beings would certainly faint away, and the vats stand quite close together; and if there is anywhere a little opening between them where one could squeeze through, still one would find it stopped up by all the wet toads and fat snakes that have become entangled together. Little Inger sank down to this place. All that disgusting living entanglement was so icy cold that she shivered through all her limbs, and she grew stiffer and stiffer. She stuck to the loaf, and it dragged her just as an amber stud drags a particle of straw.



INGER TURNED AWAY, FOR SHE WAS ASHAMED THAT SHE, WITH ALL HER FINE CLOTHES, SHOULD HAVE FOR HER MOTHER A RAGGED WOMAN WHO GATHERED STICKS.

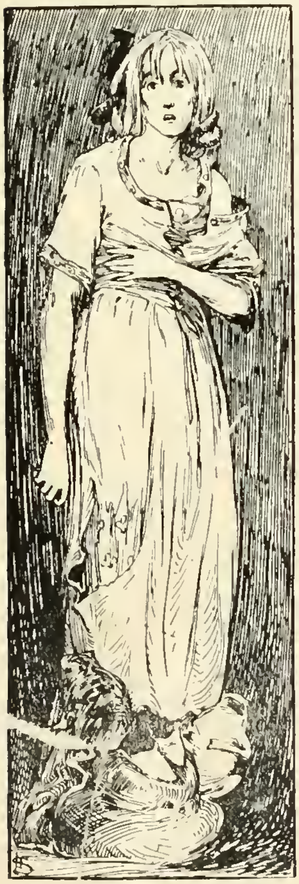
The bog-wife was at home. The brewery was that day visited by the fiend and his great-grandmother, and she is a venomous old woman who is never unoccupied; she never goes out without taking her needlework with her, and so she had brought it here. She sewed running-leather to put into men's shoes, to make them restless; she embroidered lies, and crocheted heedless words that had fallen to the ground—everything was for injury and ruin. Yes, the old great-grandmother knew how to sew, and embroider, and crochet.


FLUNG THE LOAF INTO THE MUD, THAT SHE MIGHT STEP ON IT AND COME OVER DRY-SHOD.

She saw Inger, and put up her eye-glass to her eye and looked again at her. "That is a girl with talent," she said; "I should like to have her as a reminiscence of my visit here: she will make a suitable statue in my great-grandson's anteroom."

And so she took her. In this way little Inger came to the infernal regions. People do not always go down there by the most direct way, but they can come by a roundabout way when they have talent.

It was an endless anteroom; one turns dizzy with looking forward or looking backward: and there stood there a crowd of weary people, waiting till the door should be opened. They would have to wait a long time! Great, fat, waddling spiders spun a web for thousands of years over their feet, and this web snared them as in a trap and held them fast as with copper chains; and besides that, there was a perpetual anxiety in every soul, a torturing anxiety. The avaricious man stood there, and had forgotten the key to his money-box, and he knew that it was in the lock. Yes, it would be tedious to repeat all the kinds of pain and worry—they were innumerable. Inger thought it horrid to have to stand like a statue; it seemed as if she had grown to the loaf.


BUT THE WORST OF ALL WAS THE HORRIBLE HUNGER WHICH SHE FELT.

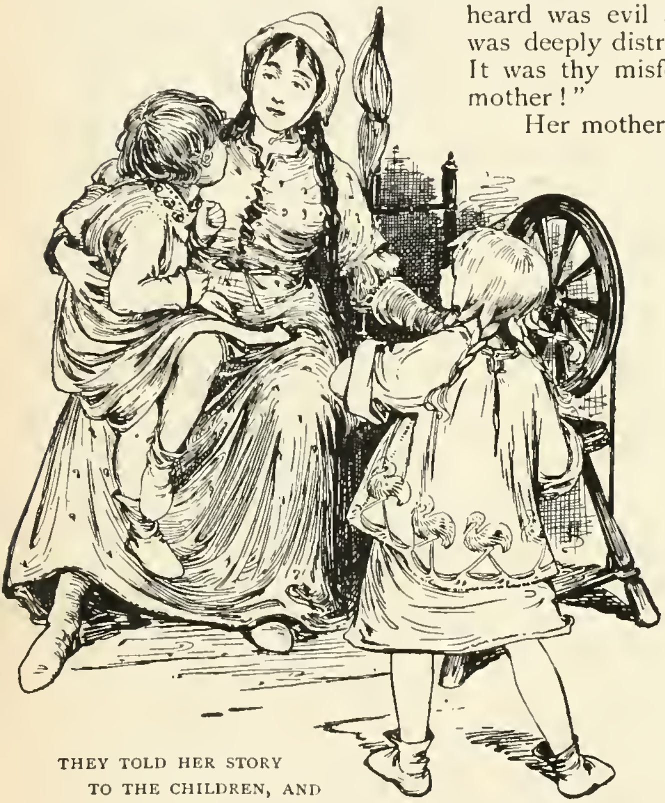
"That happens to one because one wishes to keep one's feet clean!" she said to herself. "See how they are staring at me." Yes, they were all looking at her; their evil inclinations shone out of their eyes and spoke silently from the corners of their mouths: they were dreadful to look at.

"It must be a pleasure to look at me!" thought little Inger; "I have a pretty face and good clothes!" And now she turned her eyes, for her neck was too stiff to turn. No; how dirty she had become in the bog-wife's brewhouse! she had not thought of that. Her clothes seemed to be covered with slime; a snake had entwined itself in her hair and hung down at the back of her neck, and a toad peeped forth from every fold in her frock and barked like an asthmatic pug. It was very disagreeable. "But the others down here look just as dreadful!" She comforted herself with that reflection.

But the worst of all was the horrible hunger which she felt; could she not then bend herself and break a piece off the loaf she was standing on? No; her back was stiff, her arms and hands were stiff, her whole body was like a stone column. She could only turn her eyes in her head, turn them entirely round, so that they looked out behind, and that was a ghastly sight. And then the flies came. They crept across her eyes, backwards and forwards. She blinked her eyes, but the flies did not fly away, for they could not: their wings had been pulled off, and they had become creeping things. That was a torture, as well as the hunger; and at last it seemed to her as if her inside was feeding upon itself, and she became entirely empty, so horribly empty!

"If this lasts long I shall not be able to endure it!" she said; but she was obliged to endure it, and it went on and on.

And then there fell a burning tear on her head; it rolled over her face and bosom straight down to the loaf: and then another tear fell, and many more. Who was weeping over little Inger? Had she not a mother up on the earth? Tears of grief, such as a mother weeps over her child, always reach it; but they do not set it free: they burn, and only cause greater torture. And now that intolerable hunger, and not to be able to reach the loaf which she had trodden on with her foot! She had now at length a feeling as if everything within her must have eaten itself up, she was like a slender, hollow reed that drew every sound into itself; she plainly heard everything that related to her which was said on the earth, and what she heard was evil and harsh. Her mother wept, certainly, and was deeply distressed, but she said: "Pride goes before a fall! It was thy misfortune, Inger; but how thou hast grieved thy mother!"


THEY TOLD HER STORY TO THE CHILDREN, AND THE LITTLE ONES CALLED HER "THE WICKED INGER."

Her mother and every one up there knew of her sin, that she had trodden on the loaf, and had sunk through and disappeared; the cowherd had related it, for he had seen it from the hill-side.

"How hast thou grieved thy mother, Inger!" said the mother; "yes, I thought as much!"

"Would that I had never been born!" thought Inger; "it would have been much better for me. But it can't be helped, now that my moth [illegible] ries."

She heard [illegible] r master and mistress—the worthy fo [illegible] had been like parents to her—spoke: " [illegible] a sinful child," they said; "she did no [illegible] the gifts of Heaven, but trod them un [illegible] feet. The door of grace will be narr [illegible] er to enter at."

"They should [illegible] rained me better!" thought Inger; "the [illegible] d have beaten the fancies out of me, if [illegible] y."

She heard that [illegible] tire ballad was written about her: "T [illegible] d girl who trod on the loaf lest she sh [illegible] il her shoes"; and it was sung all rou [illegible] country.

"That one should h [illegible] uch for that! and suffer so much for th [illegible] ought Inger; "certainly the others ough [illegible] nished for their faults! Yes, indeed, then there would be many to punish! Oh, how I ar [illegible] nted!"

And her temper became even harder than her body.

"Down here in this society one can't become better! And I don't wish to b [illegible] See how they stare!"

And she felt angry and ill-disposed against everybody.

"Now they have something to tell up there! Oh, how I am tormented!"

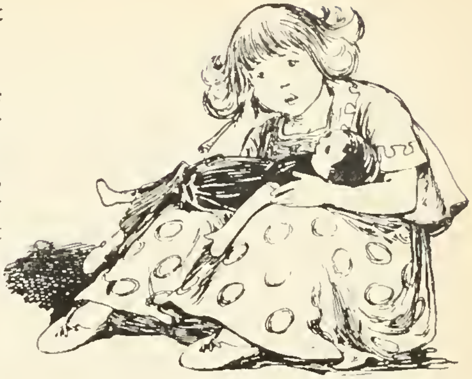
And she heard that they told her story to the children, and the little ones cal [illegible] wicked Inger." "She was so loathsome!" they said, "so hideous! it was quite right f [illegible] tortured!"

There were always hard words against her in the children's mouths.

But one day, as resentment and hunger fretted within her hollow form, and she [illegible] er name mentioned and her story told before an innocent child, a little girl, she perceive [illegible] e little one burst out crying at the story of the proud, vain Inger.

"But will she never come up again?" asked the little girl. And the answer was:

"She will never come up again."



"I DO SO WISH SHE WOULD," SAID THE LITTLE GIRL, AND SHE WAS QUITE INCONSOLABLE.

"But if she now will ask for forgiveness, and never do it again?"

"But she will not ask for forgiveness," they said.

"I do so wish that she would!" said the little girl, and she was quite inconsolable. "I will give my doll's house if she may come up! It is so horrible for poor Inger!"

And the expression went straight down into Inger's heart, as if it did her good. It was the first time that there was any one who said, "Poor Inger!" and did not add anything about its being her own fault. A little innocent child wept and prayed for her. It was so strange that it made her wish to weep herself; but she could not weep, and that also was a torture.

As years passed in the upper world—for down below there was no alteration—she heard sounds from above less frequently, for there was less said about her; then one day she noticed a sigh: "Inger! Inger! how thou hast grieved me! I said it would be so!" It was her mother, as she was dying.

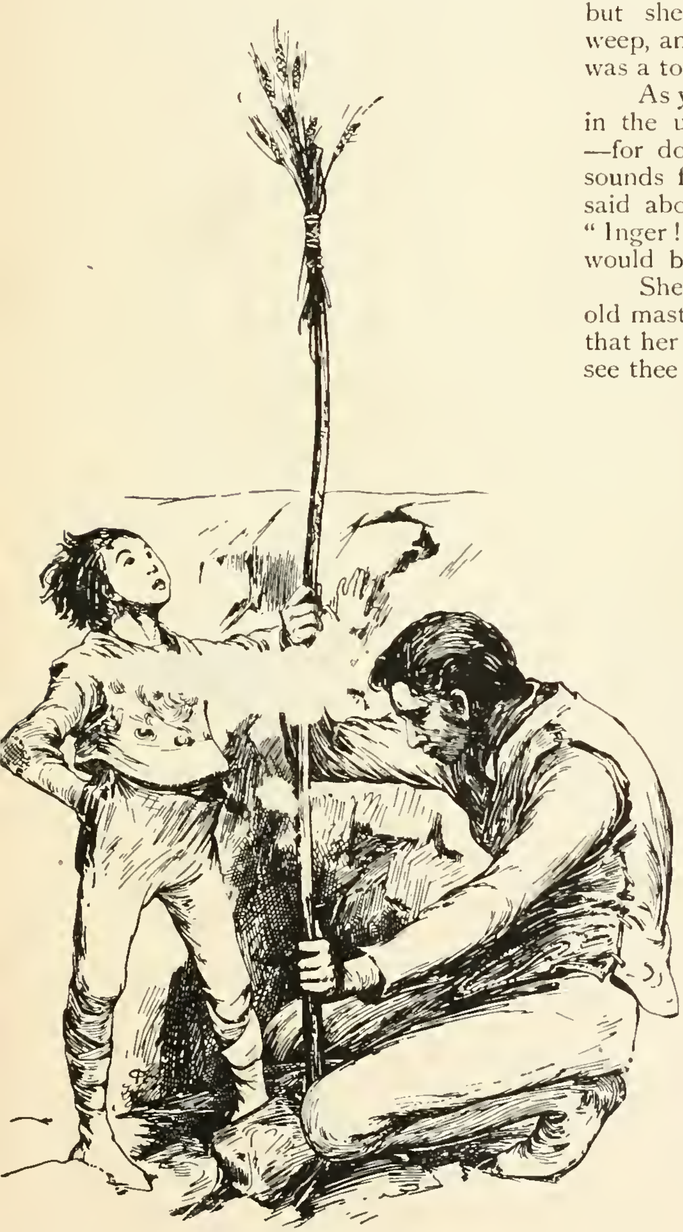
She sometimes heard her name mentioned by her old master and mistress; and it was the gentlest word that her mistress said: "I wonder whether I shall ever see thee again, Inger! One does not know where one may come to!"

But Inger understood well enough that her worthy mistress would never come where she was.

In this manner again a long and bitter time passed.

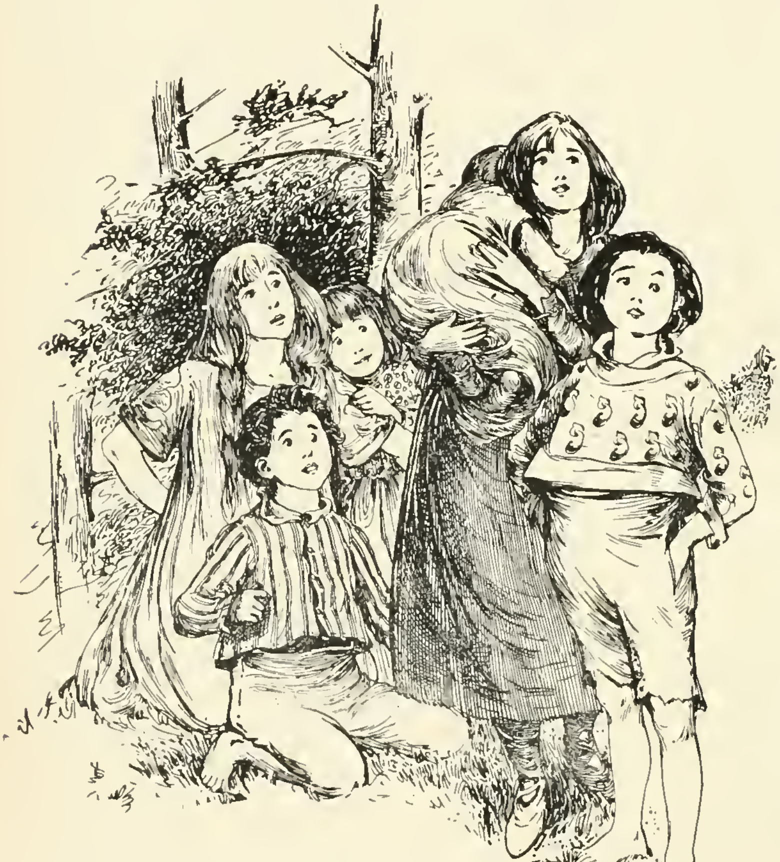
Then Inger again heard her name mentioned, and she saw overhead what looked like two clear, shining stars; they were two gentle eyes, which were closing on the earth. So many years had passed since that time when the little girl wept inconsolably for "poor Inger," that the child had become an old woman whom Heaven would now call to her rest, and just in that moment when all the thoughts of her whole life rose up, she remembered also how, as a little child, she had been caused to weep bitterly when she heard the story of Inger. That time and that impression stood out so vividly before the old woman in the hour of her death that she exclaimed quite loud: "O Lord, my God, I do not wonder that I, as well as Inger, have often trampled upon the gifts of Thy blessings without thinking of them; I wonder that I have not also walked with pride in my heart: but Thou in Thy mercy hast not suffered me to sink, but hast held me up; leave not hold of me in my last hour!"

And the eyes of the old woman closed, and the eyes of her soul opened to hidden things, and, as Inger was so strongly pre-



A PEASANT SET UP A POLE CLOSE TO THE WALL, AND TIED A SHEAF OF OATS TO THE TOP.

sent in her last thoughts, she saw her—saw where she had been dragged deep down—and at that sight the gentle lady burst into tears; in the kingdom of heaven she stood like a child and wept for poor Inger. The tears and the prayers sounded like an echo down in the hollow, empty form that enclosed the imprisoned, tortured soul which was overwhelmed by all that unthought-of kindness from above. An angel of God wept over her! Wherefore was this granted to her? It seemed as if her tortured soul recalled every deed of her earthly life, and Inger trembled as she wept such tears as she had never before been able to weep. Sorrow for her own condition filled her; she thought that for her the gate of mercy could never be opened: and when, in her contrition, she acknowledged her unworthiness, a ray of light shone down into the depths of the abyss. The ray came with a power stronger than that of sunshine which thaws a snow man that the boys have set up in the yard, and then—much more quickly than a snowflake, falling on a child's warm mouth, melts away into a drop—Inger's petrified form evaporated; a little bird soared like a flash of lightning up to the world of men. But it was fearful and afraid of all about it; it was ashamed of itself in the presence of all living creatures, and hastily sought shelter in a dark hole which it discovered in a ruined wall. Here it sat and crouched, its whole body quivering; it could not utter a sound, for it had no voice. It sat for a long time before it was sufficiently at rest to see and notice all the splendour around it. Everything was indeed splendid! The air was so fresh and mild, the moon shone so clear, trees and bushes exhaled their fragrance, and it was so comfortable where it sat, and its plumage was so clean and delicate. No, every created thing seemed still to be preserved in love and splendour. All the thoughts that arose within the bird's breast wished to break forth into song, but the bird could not sing; fain would he have sung as the cuckoo and nightingale do in the spring. Heaven, that hears the silent adoration of the worm, here also took note of the hymn which arose in harmonious thoughts, even as the psalm sounded in David's breast before he gave it words and melody.



"THERE IS A SEA-SWALLOW FLYING AWAY OVER THE SEA!" SAID THE CHILDREN.

For some weeks these silent songs grew and increased in its thoughts; they must break out at last, at the first stroke of the wings in a kind action, if such might be done.

Now came the holy festival of Christmas. A peasant set up a pole close to the wall, and tied a sheaf of oats which had not been threshed to the top, so that the birds of the air might have a merry Christmas and a joyful meal at that holy time.

And the sun rose on Christmas morning, and shone on the sheaf of oats, and all the twittering birds flew about the pole where their dinner was; then the little bird from the wall also chirped "pee, pee!" then the swelling thoughts burst forth into sound, then the weak piping became a complete hymn of joy, the thought of a kind action was aroused, and the bird flew out from its shelter. It was well known in the kingdom of heaven what it had been before it was a bird.

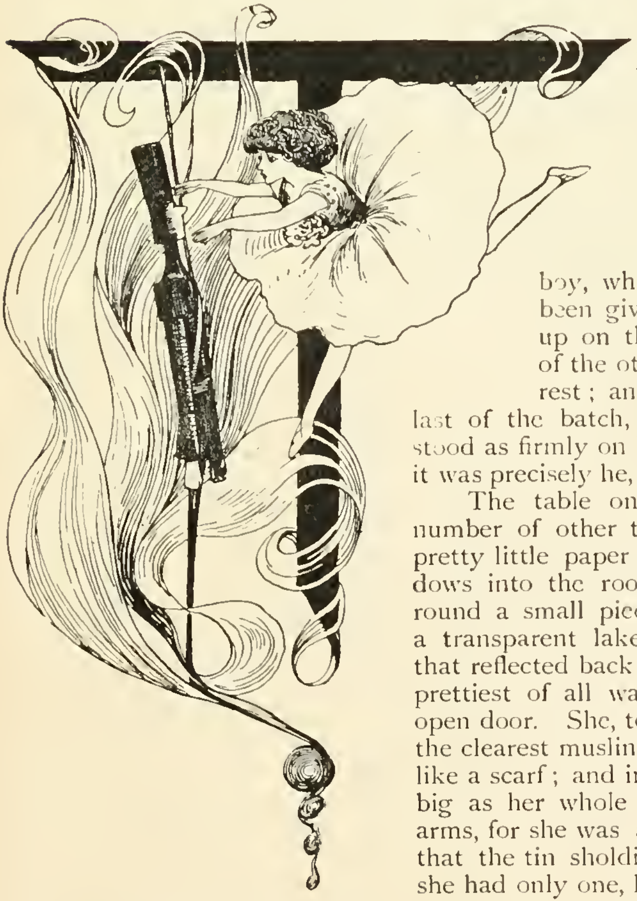
The winter set in severely, the lakes were covered with thick ice, the birds and forest creatures found it hard to get food. The little bird flew out in the highroad, and there, in the tracks of the sledges, looked for and found here and there a grain of corn; at baiting-places it found a few crumbs. It only ate a single one of these, and called on all the other starving sparrows that they might find food here. Then it flew to the towns, and looked carefully round about; and wherever a kind hand had scattered bread for the birds outside the window, there it ate only a single crumb and gave all to the others.

In the course of the winter the bird had collected and given away so many crumbs that together they weighed as much as the whole of the loaf which little Inger had trodden on lest she should soil her shoes, and when the last crumb of bread was found and given away the bird's grey wings became white and spread themselves out.

"There is a sea-swallow flying away over the sea!" said the children who saw the white bird. At one instant it plunged into the sea, at another it soared aloft in the clear sunshine; it shone so that it was not possible to see where it had gone to—they said that it flew straight into the sun.

* * *

The Constant Tin Soldier



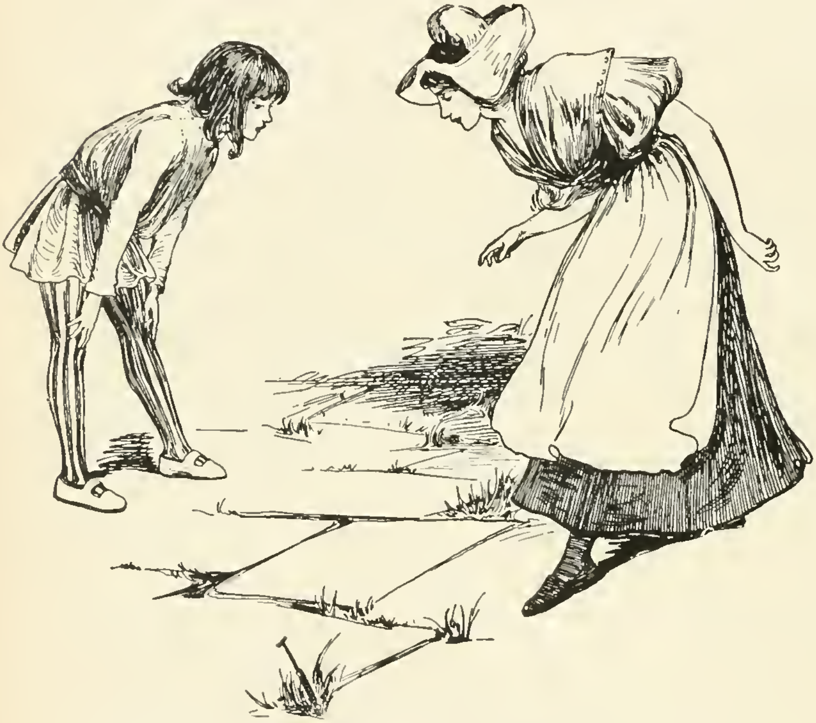
THERE were once five-and-twenty tin soldiers that were all brothers, for they were all made out of the same old tin spoon. They all shouldered their muskets, looked stiff, and wore a smart red and blue uniform. The first thing they heard in this world, when the lid was taken off the box in which they lay, were the words "Tin soldiers!" spoken by a little boy, who was clapping his hands with joy. They had been given him on his birthday, and he now set them up on the table. Each soldier was exactly the image of the other, except one that was a little different to the rest; and he had only one leg, having been melted the last of the batch, when there was not enough tin left. Yet he stood as firmly on his one leg as the others on their two legs; and it was precisely he, who became a remarkable character.

The table on which they were placed was strewed with a number of other toys, the most attractive amongst them being a pretty little paper castle. One might see through the tiny windows into the rooms. In front of the castle stood little trees, round a small piece of looking-glass, that was meant to represent a transparent lake. Wax swans were swimming on its surface, that reflected back their image. This was all very pretty; but the prettiest of all was a diminutive lady, who stood at the castle's open door. She, too, was cut out of paper; but she wore a dress of the clearest muslin and a narrow blue ribbon over her shoulders, like a scarf; and in the middle of this was placed a tinsel rose, as big as her whole face. The little lady stretched out both her arms, for she was a dancer; and then she lifted her leg so high that the tin sholdier lost sight of it, and therefore concluded that she had only one, like himself.

"She would make a fit wife for me," thought he; "only she is very genteel, and lives in a castle; while I have nothing but a box to live in, and we are five-and-twenty of us in *that*. It would be no place for a lady! Still I must try and scrape acquaintance with her." And he laid himself at full length behind a snuff-box that happened to be on the table, and from thence he could peep at the delicate little lady, who continued standing on one leg without losing her balance.

Towards evening, all the other tin soldiers were put back into the box, and the people of the house went to bed; so now the playthings began to play at various games. The tin soldiers rattled in their box, for they wanted to join the rest, but they could not lift up the lid. The nut-crackers threw somersaults, and the pencil jumped about the table; and there was such a din that the canary-bird awoke, and began to speak, and in poetry, too. The only ones who did not move from their places, were the tin soldier and the dancer. She stood on tiptoe, and stretched out both her arms; and he was just as persevering on his one leg. He did not take his eyes off her for a single moment.

The clock now struck twelve, when—crack! up flew the lid of the snuff-box; there was no snuff in it, but a little black gnome, for it was a puzzle.



THOUGH THEY HAD NEARLY TRODDEN UPON HIM, THEY COULD NOT MANAGE TO FIND HIM.

"Tin soldier," said the gnome, "don't be hankering after forbidden fruit."

But the tin soldier pretended not to have heard him.

"Only wait till to-morrow," observed the gnome.

Next morning, when the children were up, the tin soldier was placed in the window; and whether it was the gnome, or the draught, that did it, certain it is that the window flew open, and down the soldier fell, head over heels from the third storey into the street below. It was a tremendous fall! His cap and bayonet stuck fast between the flag-stones, while his leg stood upright in the air.

The servant-girl and the little boy went downstairs immediately to look after him; but, though they had nearly trodden upon him, they could not manage to find him. If the tin soldier had but called out, "Here am I!" they might have found him; but he did not think it consistent with his uniform to cry out for help.

It now began to rain. The drops fell faster and faster, and there was soon a regular shower. When it was over, two boys that were idling about the streets happened to pass by.

"Look," said one of them, "there lies a tin soldier. He shall have a sail in a boat."

And so they made a boat out of a newspaper, and placed the soldier inside it, and set him floating down the gutter. The two boys ran by his side, clapping their hands. But, dear me! what waves there were in the gutter, and what a strong current! It was, to be sure, at high water, owing to the rain. The paper boat rocked up and down, and sometimes whirled round so fast that the tin soldier trembled; yet he remained at his post, made no faces, looked straight before him, and shouldered his musket.

On a sudden, the boat shot under a long bridge that lay across the gutter, where it was as dark as in his box.

"Where am I going to?" thought he. "This must surely be the gnome's fault! Oh! if the little lady was but here at my side in the boat, it might then be as dark as it pleased, and I should not care."

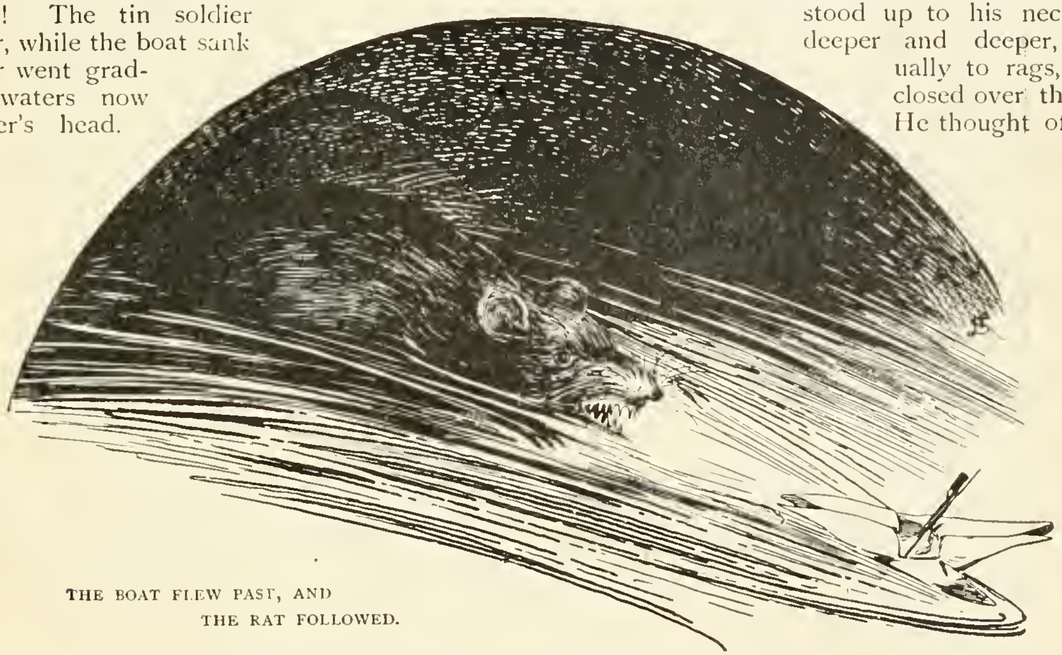
A huge rat, that lived under the bridge of the gutter, now made his appearance.

"Have you a pass?" enquired the rat. "Come, out with it!" But the tin soldier remained silent, and held his musket still tighter.

The boat flew past, and the rat followed. How he did gnash his teeth, and call out to the wood-shavings and the straw: "Stop him! stop him! He has not paid the toll, nor shown his pass."

But the stream gushed on more madly still, and the tin soldier could already see daylight at the point where the bridge ended; at the same time, however, he heard a rushing sound, well calculated to appal even the bravest. Only fancy! just where the bridge left off, the waters widened into a large sheet that fell into the mouth of a sewer; and such a situation was as perilous to him as it would be for us to sail down a waterfall in a boat.

He was now so near the precipice that he could no longer keep himself back. The boat dashed on, and the poor tin soldier kept as stiff as ever he could, that nobody should say of him that he had even so much as winked an eye. The boat now spun round three or four times, till it was filled with water to the edge — and sink it must! The tin soldier stood up to his neck in water, while the boat sank deeper and deeper, the paper went gradually to rags, and the waters now closed over the tin soldier's head. He thought of the elegant little dancer, whom he should never see again, and in his ears rang the burden of the old song:—



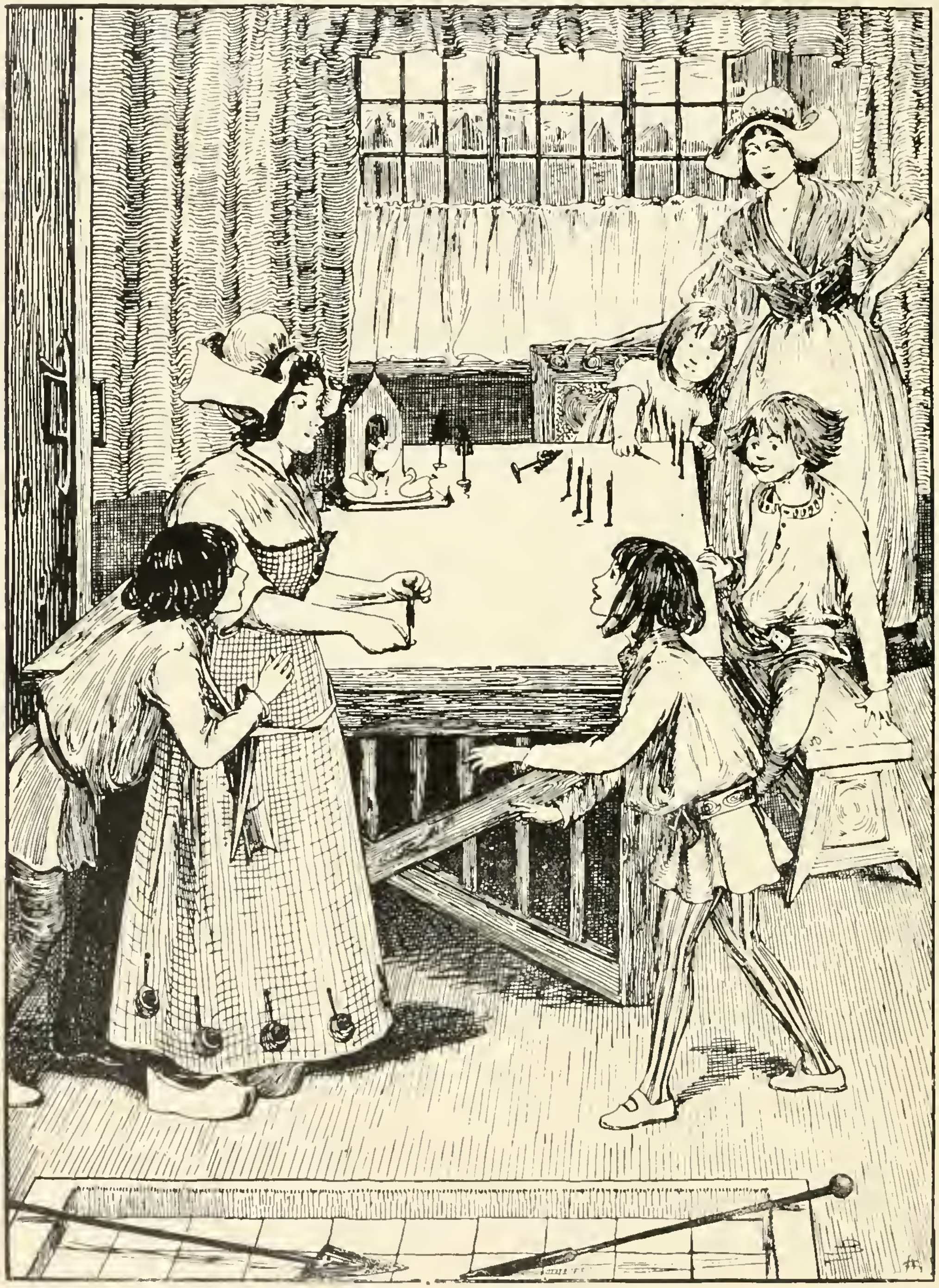
THE BOAT FLEW PAST, AND THE RAT FOLLOWED.

> "On, soldier! on—on—though swords clash and shots rattle,
> 'Tis thy fate to find death in the midst of the battle."

And now the paper fell in two, and down the tin soldier was flung—but was instantly swallowed up by a huge fish.

Oh! how dark it was inside the fish!—worse a great deal than under the bridge over the gutter, and, besides, it was such a narrow place. But the tin soldier retained his fortitude, and lay at full length with his gun on his shoulder.

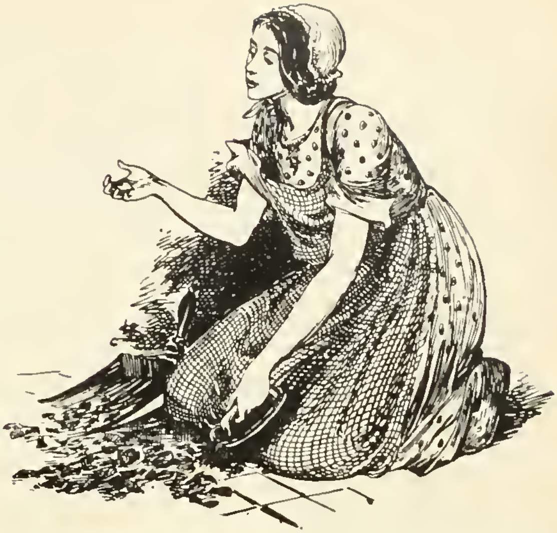
The fish swam about, making the most frightful contortions. At last he became quite quiet. Then a flash of lightning seemed to dart through him, daylight appeared, and a voice called out, "The tin soldier, as I'm alive!" The fish had been caught, taken to market, and sold, and was now in the kitchen, where the cook was opening it with a large knife. She picked up the soldier by the waist, between her finger and thumb, and carried him into the sitting-room, where everybody was desirous of seeing such a celebrated man, who had travelled about inside a fish. But the tin soldier was not the more conceited for that. They placed him on the table, and there—what odd events do happen in the world, to be sure! The tin soldier found himself once more in the identical room in which he had been before, and saw the same children, and the same playthings on the table, together with the noble castle and the elegant little dancer. She was still standing on one leg, and still holding up the other—she, too, was constant. This touched the tin soldier so deeply that he was fit to weep tin, only he restrained himself, as in duty bound. He looked at her, and she looked at him, but they said nothing.



EVERYBODY WAS DESIROUS OF SEEING SUCH A CELEBRATED MAN, WHO HAD TRAVELLED ABOUT INSIDE A FISH.

Then one of the little boys took up the soldier, and flung him right into the stove; nor did he give any reason for so doing, which plainly showed that the gnome in the box was at the bottom of it all.

The tin soldier was now lighted up by the flames, and felt a tremendous degree of heat; but whether it proceeded from the real fire, or from the fire of love, he could not exactly tell. His colour was completely gone, but whether this had happened during his travels, or was merely the effects of grief, nobody could guess. He looked at the little lady, and she looked at him, and he felt himself melting away; still he stood firm with his gun on his shoulder. The door now happened to open, and the wind caught up the dancer, who fluttered like a sylph right into the stove beside the tin soldier, and was instantly consumed by the flames. The tin soldier melted down to a lump, and next day, when the maid raked out the ashes, she found him in the shape of a little tin heart. Of the dancer nothing remained but the tinsel rose, and that was as black as a cinder.


WHEN THE MAID RAKED OUT THE ASHES, SHE FOUND HIM IN THE SHAPE OF A LITTLE TIN HEART.

* * *

The Snow Queen

IN SEVEN STORIES

Story the First—Which Treats of a Looking-Glass and its Broken Fragments

LISTEN to me, and the story shall begin. When we shall have got to the end, we shall know more than we do now; for it is about a very wicked hobgoblin! He was one of the craftiest that ever lived; in short, he was the arch-fiend in person. One day, when he was in a facetious humour, he made a looking-glass which possessed the power of diminishing, almost to a nonentity, everything good and beautiful mirrored on its surface, while all that was worthless or ill-looking was brought out into still stronger relief. Seen in this glass, the most lovely landscapes looked like cooked spinach, and the best amongst mankind appeared repulsive, and as if standing on his head. The countenances were so distorted that they were unrecognisable; and if one had a single freckle, one would have been led to believe that it extended over one's nose and mouth. The arch-fiend said this was extremely entertaining. If a good, pious thought entered a human being's brain, a flaw appeared in the looking-glass, and made the arch-fiend laugh at his cunning invention. All those who attended the hobgoblin's school — for he kept one — spread the fame of the wonderful glass in all directions, and maintained that people might now see, for the first time, how the world and its inhabitants really looked. They carried the glass about everywhere, till at last there was not a land nor a human being left but what had been seen distorted on its surface. They now presumed to attempt to scale the regions of the blessed; but the higher they flew with the glass the more it cracked. They could scarcely hold it fast, yet they flew higher and higher, and still nearer the sun, till the glass shook so dreadfully in the process of fusion that it slipped out of their hands, and fell upon the earth, where it split into millions and billions of pieces; and by this means it became still more mischievous than heretofore, for some of the shivers were scarcely so large as a grain of sand, and these flew about the world, and when they lodged in anybody's eye, there they remained, and the person thenceforth saw everything through a distorted medium, or only approved the perverse side of a question; for every minute fragment of the glass possessed the same qualities that formerly belonged to the whole glass. Some human beings had a piece right through their heart—and this was shocking, for it made their hearts as cold as a lump of ice. Some of these fragments were so large that they served for window-panes; but it would not have done to look at one's friends through such panes as those. Other pieces were set as spectacles, and it was hard for those who wore them to see anything in its proper light, or to have the least sense of justice; and the arch-fiend laughed till he shook his sides, so amazingly was he tickled by all the mischief that arose. And many little glass shivers flew besides through the air, as we shall presently hear.

Story the Second—A Little Boy and a Little Girl

In a large town, where the population was so dense and the houses so closely packed that there was no room for everybody to have a little garden, and consequently the bulk of the inhabitants were obliged to rest satisfied with the possession of a few plants in flower-pots, there lived two poor children, who had a somewhat larger garden than a mere flower-pot. They were not brother and sister, though they loved one another quite as much as if they had been.

Their parents lived opposite each other, in two garrets, where the roof of a neighbouring house joined theirs, and a gutter ran all along between the two roofs. In each house was a little window, and, by stepping over the gutter, it was easy to go from one window to the other.

The parents on both sides had a large wooden box, in which they reared pot-herbs for their own use, and a little rose-tree. There was one in each box, and they flourished amazingly! The parents now took it into their heads to place these boxes across the gutter, so that they nearly reached from one window to another, and looked like two flowery banks. Blooming peas flung their tendrils over the edge of the boxes, and the rose-trees put forth their long sprigs, that twined about the windows, and leaned towards each other. In short, it was almost like a triumphal arch of leaves and flowers.

As the boxes were very high, and the children knew that they must not climb up to them, they often had leave to get down out of the window to each other, and to sit on their little stools under the roses. And then they played together so prettily.

In winter there was an end to such pleasures. The windows were frequently covered with frost; but then they warmed copper-pieces on the stove, and laid a warm coin on the frozen pane, and that made such a nice round hole to peep through. And then a soft, bright eye beamed from each window—this was the little boy and the little girl looking at each other. His name was Kay, and hers Gerda. In summer they needed but to take a leap to be side by side, but in winter they had many stairs to go down, and then to go up again, before they could meet; and now the snow-flakes were flying about abroad.

"The white bees are swarming," said grandmother.

"Have they, too, a queen bee?" asked the little boy.

"To be sure," said the grandmother; "she is flying in the thickest of the swarm. She is the largest of them all, and never remains upon the ground, but flutters upwards again towards the black clouds. She often flies through the streets of the town at midnight, and peeps in at the windows, and then they freeze into such odd shapes, and look like flowers."

"Yes, I have seen that," said both the children, and now they knew it was true.

"Can the Snow Queen come in here?" asked the little girl.

"Let her come," said the boy, "and I'll put her on the warm stove, and then she must melt."

But grandmother stroked his hair, and told them other stories.

In the evening, when little Kay had returned home and was half undressed, he climbed on a chair up to the window, and peeped through the little hole, when he saw some snow-flakes falling, the largest among which alighted on the edge of one of the flower-boxes, and kept increasing and increasing till it became a full-grown woman, dressed in the most aërial white gauze, that seemed to consist of millions of star-like flakes fastened together. She was delicately beautiful, but made of ice—dazzling, glittering ice. Yet was she living; her eyes sparkled like two bright stars, and there seemed to be no rest or calmness in them. She nodded towards the window, and waved her hand. The little boy was frightened, and jumped down from the chair, and then he thought he saw a large bird fly past the window.

On the following day there was a clear frost; and then at last the spring came. The sun shone, the earth was clothed in green, the swallows built their nests, the windows were opened, and the little children once more sat in their small garden on the roof, high above all the other storeys.

The roses blossomed most beautifully that summer. The little girl had learned a psalm in which roses were mentioned, and the roses reminded her of it; and she sang it to the little boy, and he joined her in singing:—

"The roses bloom but one short hour, then die;
But th' infant Jesus ever lives on high!"

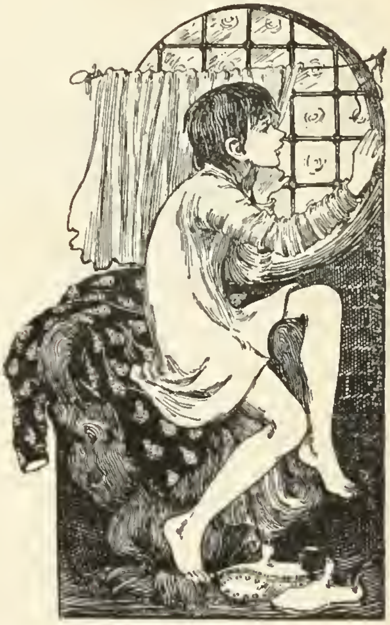
And the little ones held each other by the hand, and kissed the roses, and looked up at God's bright sunshine, and addressed it as though it were the infant Jesus. Oh, those were pleasant summer days! It was so delightful up there near the fresh rose-trees, that seemed never to mean to have done blossoming.

Kay and Gerda sat looking in their book at the pictures of quadrupeds and birds, when, just as the great church clock struck five, Kay said: "Oh, dear! Something pricks my heart, and something has flown into my eye."

The little girl put her arm round his neck, and his eyes twinkled, but there was nothing to be seen in them. "I think it is gone," said he; but gone it was not. It was one of those bits of glass no bigger than a grain of sand, being a particle of the magic glass, which we have not forgotten—of that nasty glass that made everything great and good look small and ugly, while all that was bad and disagreeable stood out in strong relief, and every fault in anything became immediately perceptible. Poor Kay had likewise received a grain right through his heart, which was soon to grow as hard as a lump of ice. He now ceased to feel any pain, but there the grain remained.

"Why do you cry?" asked he. "You look so ugly! Nothing ails me. Fie!" cried he suddenly, "there's a worm-hole in that rose. And look, that one is quite crooked! Altogether they are nasty roses, as bad as the boxes in which they are set." And then he kicked the boxes, and tore off the two roses.

"Kay, what are you doing?" cried the little girl; and when he saw how frightened she was, he tore off another rose, and then leaped in at his window away from sweet little Gerda.


HE CLIMBED UP TO THE WINDOW.

The next time she brought out the picture-book, he said it was only fit for children in swaddling clothes; and when his grandmother related a story, he was sure to interrupt her with some "ifs" and "buts"; and whenever he could manage it, he would place himself behind her, put on a pair of spectacles, and speak just like her; and he mimicked her so well that everybody laughed. He could soon mimic both the voice and the gait of every soul in the street. Kay was sure to imitate to the life the disagreeable attributes of each person, and people said, "That boy will surely be a genius." But it was only the bit of glass that had stuck in his eye and in his heart, and which made him tease even little Gerda, who loved him so dearly.

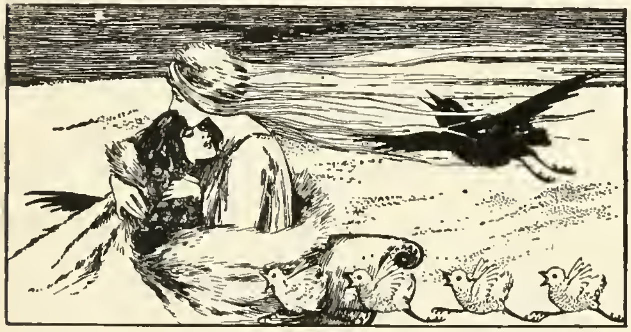
His amusements were now quite different to what they were formerly: they savoured more of a grown person. One winter's day, when it had snowed, he came with a burning-glass, and held out the skirt of his blue coat to catch some flakes of snow.

"Now look in the glass, Gerda," said he. And every flake was magnified, and looked like a beautiful flower or a decagonal star; and very pretty it was to see. "Now is not this scientific?"

said Kay; "and how far more interesting than real flowers. There is not a fault in them; they are quite correct, provided they don't melt away."

Soon after Kay appeared with thick gloves on his hands, and his sledge at his back, and called out to Gerda, "I have leave to go to the great square, where other boys are playing." And away he went.

The boldest among the boys who used to play there often fastened their sledges to the carts of the country people who passed by, and went a good way with them. And this amused them vastly. In the height of their play there came along a large sledge painted white, in which sat some one huddled up in a rough white skin, and wearing a rough white cap. The sledge went twice round the square, and Kay, having hastily bound his little sledge to it, drove away in its wake. It went faster and still faster right down the adjoining street. The driver turned round and gave Kay a friendly nod, just as if they were acquainted; and every time that Kay wanted to unfasten his little sledge the driver nodded again, and Kay sat still; and thus they drove out at one of the gates of the town. It now began to snow so heavily that the little boy could not see a hand's length before him; but on they went. And though he suddenly let go the string, in order to get loose from the large sledge, it proved of no use; for his little craft still clung fast to the other, and they went with the speed of the wind. He then screamed aloud, but nobody heard him; and the snow kept fluttering about, and the sledge kept flying, and anon there was a violent shock, as if they were leaping over hedges and ditches. The boy was frightened, and tried to repeat the Lord's Prayer; but he could only think of the multiplication-table.



AND SHE PLACED HIM BESIDE HER IN THE SLEDGE, AND WRAPPED THE SKIN ROUND HIM.

The flakes of snow grew larger and larger, and at last looked like great white fowls. These suddenly jumped on one side, the large sledge stopped, and the person who had driven it rose. The skin and the cap were of snow, and he saw a tall and slender lady of dazzling whiteness—and this was the Snow Queen!

"We have come along at a good pace," said she; "but if you don't wish to freeze, creep into my bear-skin." And she placed him beside her in the sledge, and wrapped the skin round him, and it was just as if he were sinking into a snow-drift.

"Are you still freezing?" said she, as she kissed his forehead. Oh! that kiss was colder than ice! It seemed to shoot right through his heart, half of which was already a lump of ice, and he felt as if he were going to die—but only for a moment, and then he was better than ever, and ceased to feel the coldness of the atmosphere that surrounded him.

"My sledge! Don't forget my sledge!" That was his first thought; and so it was fastened to one of the white fowls, who flew behind, with the sledge on its back. The Snow Queen kissed Kay once more, and then he clean forgot little Gerda, and his grandmother, and everybody at home.

"Now you shall have no more kisses," said she, "or I should kiss you to death."

Kay looked at her, and she was beautiful to behold. A more intellectual or lovely countenance he could not imagine; and she no longer seemed to him to be made of ice, as she did formerly, when she sat outside the window and nodded to him. In his eyes she appeared perfect; nor did she inspire him with the slightest fear. He told her that he could reckon by heart, and even reduce fractions; and that he knew how many square miles there were in the land, and the number of its inhabitants. And she continued smiling; and then he thought that what he knew was not sufficient, and he looked up towards the vast expanse of air above them, and she flew with him high above the black clouds, where the storm was raging; and it seemed as if it were singing old songs. Then they flew over forests, and lakes, across the sea and the lands beyond. Under them blew the cold wind, the wolves howled, the snow crackled, and the black, cawing crows were hovering about; but high above all shone the clear large moon, and Kay witnessed the long, long winter's night. In the daytime he slept at the feet of the Snow Queen.

STORY THE THIRD

THE FLOWER-GARDEN OF THE CONJURING WOMAN

BUT how fared little Gerda when Kay did not return? Where could he be? Nobody knew, nobody could give any tidings of him. Only the boys said they had seen him fasten his sledge to a mighty, large one that had driven through the streets and out by the town gate. Nobody knew whither he had gone; many tears were shed; little Gerda cried so bitterly and so long. And then people said he was dead, that he had got drowned in the river that flowed past the school. Oh! what long, dreary winter days were those!

The spring now returned, and brought a warmer sunshine. "Kay is dead and gone," said little Gerda.

"I don't believe it," answered the sunshine.

"He is dead and gone!" said she to the swallows.

"We don't believe it," answered they; and at length little Gerda ceased to believe it any longer.

"I will put on my new red shoes," said she one morning, "those which Kay never saw, and then I'll go down to the river and ask after him."

It was quite early. She kissed her old grandmother, who was yet asleep, put on the red shoes, and went all alone out through the town gate, towards the river.

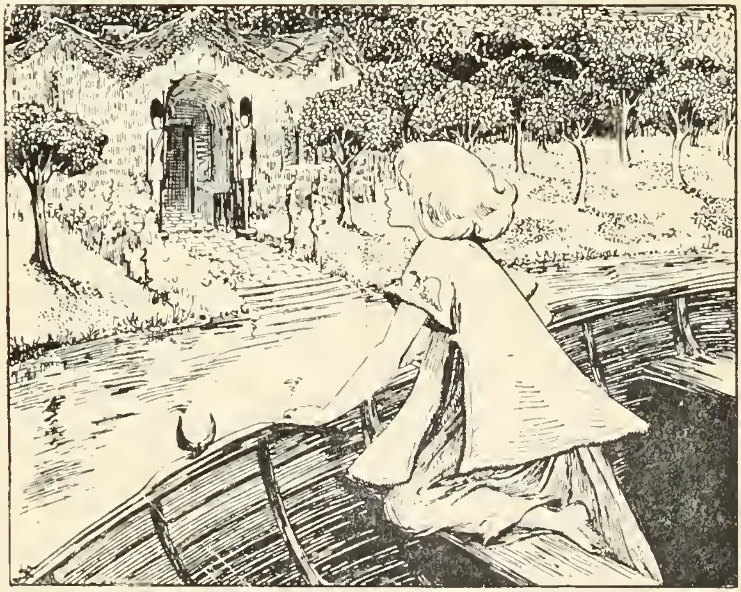
"Is it true that you have taken my little playfellow away from me?" said she. "I will make you a present of my red shoes if you will give him me back."

And it seemed to her as if the waves nodded to her in a singular fashion; and then she took off her red shoes, which she was so fond of, and threw them into the water. But they fell near the bank, and the little waves brought them back to land, just as if the river would not accept of what she most valued, as it had not little Kay to give in exchange. But now she fancied that she had not thrown the shoes out far enough, and so she crept into a boat that lay amongst the sedges, and went to the farthest end of it, and then flung the shoes from thence into the water. But, as the boat was not fastened, her motion set it gliding away from the strand. Perceiving this, she hastened to get out of the boat, but before she had time to do so, it was above an ell distant from land, and soon floated along still faster.

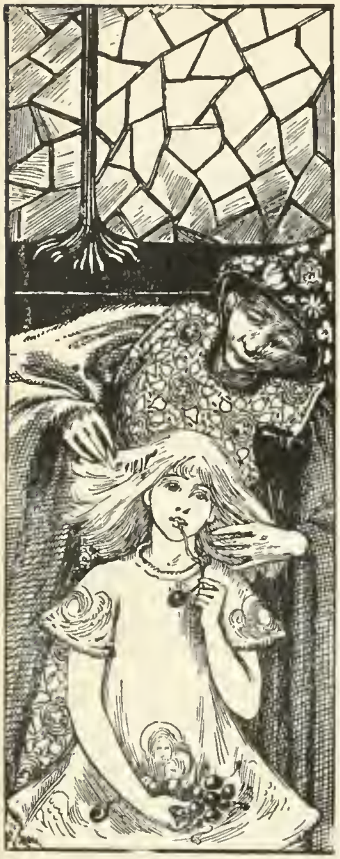
Little Gerda was now frightened, and began to cry; only nobody heard her except the sparrows, and they could not carry her ashore. But they flew along the banks, and, as if to comfort her, they kept singing, "Here we are! Here we are!" The boat followed the tide. Little Gerda sat still, with only her stockings on her feet; her little red shoes followed in the wake of the boat, but without being able to reach it, as it went much faster.

The banks on each side of the river were very pretty. There were beautiful flowers, aged trees, and grassy slopes, on which sheep and cows were grazing; but not a human being was to be seen.

"Perhaps the river will carry me to little Kay," thought Gerda; and then she grew more cheerful, and rose and looked for hours



A LITTLE HOUSE WITH STRANGE RED AND BLUE WINDOWS. IT HAD, BESIDES, A THATCHED ROOF, AND BEFORE IT STOOD TWO WOODEN SOLDIERS, WHO PRESENTED ARMS TO ALL WHO SAILED PAST.



WHILE SHE WAS EATING, THE OLD WOMAN COMBED HER HAIR WITH A GOLDEN COMB.

at the pretty green banks of the river, till she reached a large cherry orchard, in which stood a little house with strange red and blue windows. It had, besides, a thatched roof, and before it stood two wooden soldiers, who presented arms to all who sailed past.

Gerda called to them, thinking they were alive, but of course they did not answer. She now approached them, and the tide drove the boat straight towards the shore.

Gerda called out in a still louder voice, when a very old woman, leaning on a crutch, came out of the house. She wore a broad hat to screen her from the sun, and it was painted with the prettiest flowers.

"You poor little child!" said the old woman: "to think of your coming out into the wide world on this broad and rapid stream!" and the old woman waded through the water, towed the boat ashore with her crutch, and lifted little Gerda out.

Gerda was glad to be once more on dry land, although she was somewhat afraid of the strange old woman.

"Come and tell us who you are, and how you came hither," said she.

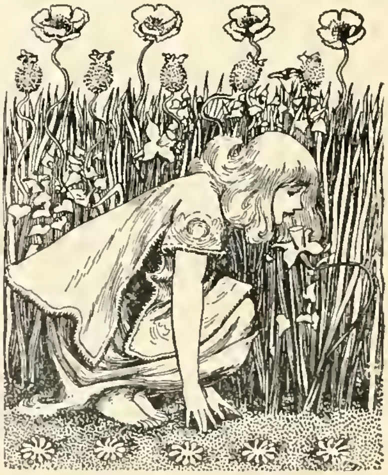
And Gerda told her all; and the old woman shook her head, and said, "Hem, hem!" And after Gerda had told her everything, and had asked in turn if she had not seen little Kay, the woman said he had not yet passed that way, but he might come still; and so she had better take heart, and taste her cherries, and look at her flowers, that were prettier than any picture-book, for every one of them could tell a story. She then took Gerda by the hand, and led her into the house, and the old woman shut the door.

The windows were very high, and the panes were red, blue, and yellow, so that the light shone through them in a variety of strange colours. But on the table were the finest cherries, and Gerda was allowed to eat as many of them as she chose. While she was eating, the old woman combed her hair with a golden comb, and her yellow locks curled and looked beautifully glossy round her cheerful little face, that was round and fresh as a rose.

"I have long wished for such a nice little girl," said the old woman, "and now you shall see how comfortably we shall live together." And while she was combing little Gerda's hair, Gerda forgot more and more all about her adopted brother Kay, for the old woman was learned in witchcraft, though not a wicked sorceress: she only made use of magic arts for her amusement, and because she wished to keep little Gerda. Therefore she went into the garden, and extended her crutch towards all the rose trees, every one of which, however blooming, sank into the dark ground, without leaving a trace of where it had stood. The old crone was fearful lest the sight of rose-trees would have reminded Gerda of her own, when she would have recollected little Kay, and run away.

She now took Gerda into the garden. How fragrant and how lovely it was! Every imaginable flower, and for every season too, were to be seen there in full bloom. No picture-book could be more varied or more beautiful. Gerda jumped for joy at the sight, and played till the sun sank behind the tall cherry-trees, and then she lay down in an elegant bed with red silk pillows, stuffed with variegated violets, and slept and dreamed as pleasantly as any queen on her wedding-day.

Next morning she was free to play again with the flowers in the warm sunshine; and many days flew by in the same manner. Gerda knew each flower; but numerous as were the



GERDA KNEW EVERY FLOWER.

flowers, there still seemed to be one missing, although she could not tell which it was. One day, however, as she sat and gazed at the old woman's garden hat with its painted flowers, the prettiest among them happened to be a rose. The old woman had forgotten to take it out of the hat when she buried the others in the earth. But that is the way when one's thoughts are not always present. "What! are there no roses here?" said Gerda, jumping amongst the flower-beds, and looking for what, alas! was not to be found. She then sat down and cried, and her tears fell just on the spot where one of the rose-trees had sunk into the ground; and when her warm tears bedewed the earth, the rose-tree shot up once more as blooming as ever, and Gerda embraced it, and kissed the roses, and thought of the lovely roses at home, and with them of little Kay.

"Oh, how I have been detained!" said the little girl; "I wanted to look for little Kay. Do you not know where he is?" asked she of the roses. "Do you think he is dead?"

"He is not dead," answered the roses; "we have been into the ground, where all the dead lie, and Kay was not there."

"I thank you," said little Gerda, and went to the other flowers, and peeped into each calyx, and asked, "Do you know where little Kay is?"

But each flower stood dreaming in the sun, and thinking of its own story; and Gerda heard a great many of these, but none of the flowers knew anything about Kay.

What said the yellow lily?

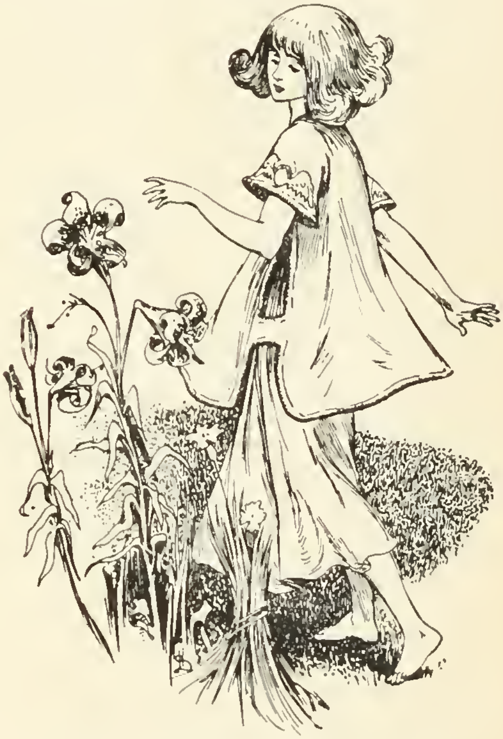
"Do you hear the drum? Boom! boom! It has only two sounds; it always says 'Boom! boom!' Listen to the dirge of the women, and the call of the priests. The Hindoo widow stands, wrapped in her long red mantle, on the funeral pile; the flames encircle her and her husband's dead body. But the Hindoo widow thinks of the living ones who surround her, and of him whose eyes shine brighter than the flames—of him whose fiery eyes affect her heart far more than the flames that will consume her body to ashes. Can the flame of the heart be extinguished in the flames of a funeral pile?"

"I don't understand anything about it," said little Gerda.

"That is my story," said the yellow lily.

What said the bindweed?

"An old feudal castle hangs over the narrow crossway; thick house-leek is climbing, leaf by leaf, up its old red walls and round the balcony, where stands a fair maiden, who bends over the railing, and looks into the road below. No rose on its spray is fresher than she; no apple-blossom when blown off the tree floats more lightly than she walks; and how her gorgeous silk gown rustles! 'Is he not yet coming?'"



"I DON'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING ABOUT IT," SAID LITTLE GERDA.

"Do you mean Kay?" asked little Gerda.

"I'm speaking of my story—of my dream," replied the bindweed.

What said the little snowdrop?

"Between the trees hangs a plant fastened by ropes; it is a swing, and two little girls, in snow-white dresses, and with long green ribbons fluttering from their bonnets, sit swinging themselves. Their brother, who is bigger than they, stands on the swing; he has flung his arm round the rope to steady himself, for in one hand he holds a little bowl, and in the other a clay pipe. He is blowing soap-bubbles; the swing keeps going, and the pretty variegated bubbles fly about, while the last still clings to the stem of the pipe, and rocks in the wind. The swing keeps going; the little black dog, as light as the bubbles, raises himself on his hind paws, and will get into the swing amongst the rest; and off goes the swing, and the dog falls, barks, and is angry; the children tease him, and the bubbles burst. A rocking plank, and scattered foam—such is my song."

"It may be all very pretty, but you tell it in so mournful a tone, and you don't even mention little Kay.

What said the hyacinths?

"There were three beautiful sisters, most delicate and transparent; one was dressed in red, the other in blue, and the third in pure white; and they danced, hand in hand, near the silent lake, in the bright moonshine. They were no elves, but daughters of the earth. There was a sweet fragrance, and the girls disappeared in the wood. The fragrance waxed stronger; three coffins, in which lay the beautiful girls, glided from the thicket across the lake: the glow-worms flew beside them, like so many little floating torches. Are the dancing girls asleep, or are they dead? The perfume of the flowers says they are corpses, and the evening bell is tolling their knell.

"You make me quite sad," said little Gerda. "You smell so strong that you make me think of the dead girls. Alas! is little Kay really dead? The roses who went down into the earth say he is not."

"Ding, dong!" sounded the hyacinth bells. "We are not tolling for little Kay, for we don't know him; we are merely singing our song, the only one we can sing."

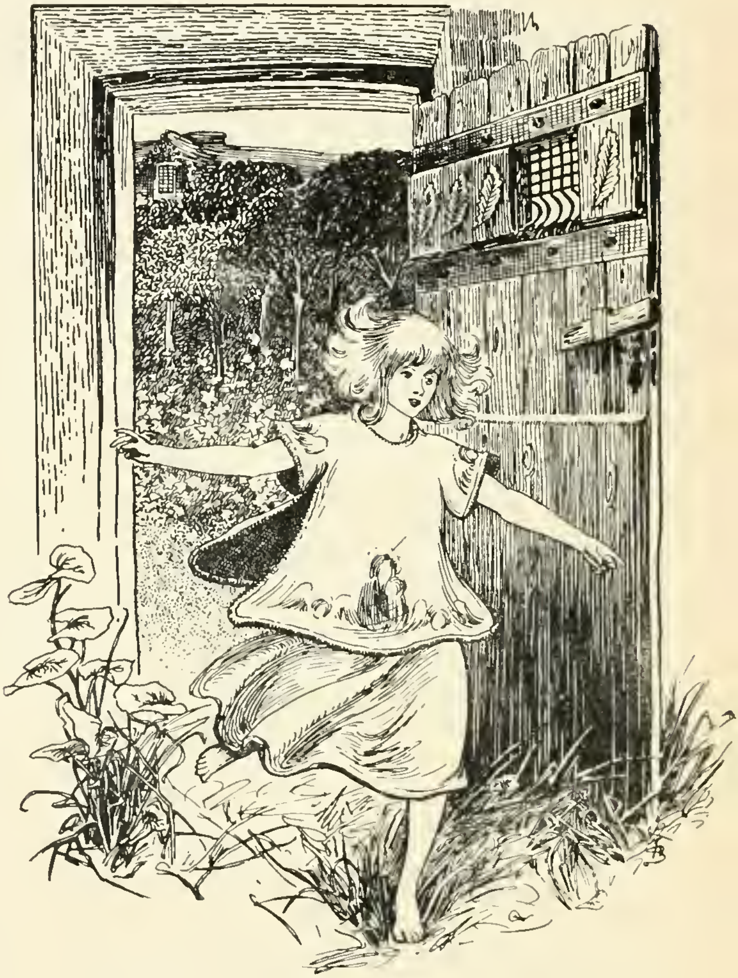
And Gerda then went up to the buttercup, that peeped out of its shining green leaves.

"You are a bright little sun," said Gerda; "tell me, if you know, where I can find my playfellow?"

And the buttercup sparkled so prettily and looked at Gerda. What song could the buttercup sing? Not one that said anything about Kay.

"The bright sunshine shone warmly, one spring morning, upon a little courtyard. The beams glided down the white walls of the neighbouring house, and close by bloomed the first yellow flower, and sparkled like gold in the warm sunshine. The old grandmother sat out in the air on her chair, and her grand-daughter, a poor and pretty serving-girl, returned home from a short visit. She kissed her grandmother. There was gold—the gold of the heart—in that blessed kiss. There was gold in the sunbeams of that morning, and she was worth her weight in gold. That's my little story," said the buttercup.

"My poor old grandmother," sighed Gerda. "Yes, no doubt she is longing to see me, and fretting about me as she did about little Kay. But I'll soon go home, and bring Kay with me. It is no use asking the flowers, who know nothing but their own song: they can give me no tidings." And then she tucked up her little gown that she might run the faster; but the narcissus caught her foot as she was jumping over it: so she stopped short, and looked at the tall yellow flower, and said, "Perhaps you know something?" And she stooped down close to the narcissus, and what did it tell?



LITTLE GERDA RAN FORTH, WITH BARE FEET, INTO THE WIDE WORLD.

"I can see myself to the very life!" said the narcissus. "Oh! oh! how beautifully I do smell! Up there, in that small room with a balcony, is a little dancer, who stands sometimes on one leg and sometimes on both legs; she tramples on the whole world: she is nothing but deceit from head to foot. She pours water out of the teapot upon a piece of stuff she holds in her hand, which is her bodice. Cleanliness is a virtue! Her white dress hangs upon a peg—that, too, has been washed in the teapot, and dried upon the roof. She puts it on, and wraps a saffron-coloured handkerchief round her throat, which makes her dress look whiter. Now she twirls her leg—and see how proudly she stands on her stem. It is just like seeing myself—just like myself."

"What do I care about that?" said Gerda. "You had no need to tell me this stuff." And she ran to the further end of the garden.

The gates were shut; but she pressed upon the rusty latch, and it gave way.

The gates flew open, and little Gerda ran forth, with bare feet, into the wide world. She looked back thrice, but nobody was pursuing her. At last she could run no longer, and sat down upon a large stone, and, on looking round her, found that summer was over, and autumn already far advanced; which she had been unable to perceive in the beautiful garden, where there were flowers and sunshine all the year round.

"Dear me! how long I have stayed!" said little Gerda. "It is now autumn; I must not dally"; and she rose to go further.

Oh, how tired and sore were her poor little feet! And everything around looked so bleak and so cheerless. The long willow-leaves were quite yellow, and dew trickled down like water. One leaf kept falling after another, and the sloe-tree alone still bore fruit, only it was so sour that one could not eat it without making wry faces. Oh, how grey and how dreary seemed the whole world!

Story the Fourth—The Prince and Princess

GERDA was obliged to rest again, when a large crow hopped through the snow, right opposite the place where she was sitting; and, after looking at her a long while, and wagging his head, said: "Caw! caw! goo' day, goo' day!" He could not speak any plainer, but he meant kindly towards the little girl, and asked whither she was going, all alone in the wide world?

Gerda understood perfectly the word "alone," and knew its full import; so she told the crow her whole story, and asked him if he had seen Kay.

The crow nodded his head thoughtfully, and said, "May be—may be."

"No—have you though?" cried the little girl, and had nearly hugged the crow to death, so fondly did she kiss him.

"Steady, steady," said the crow; "I think—I know—I believe—it may be little Kay; but he has certainly forgotten you by this time for the princess."

"Is he living at a princess's?" asked Gerda.

"Yes; listen," said the crow: "only I find it so hard to speak your language. If you understand crows' language,[1] then I shall be able to tell you better."

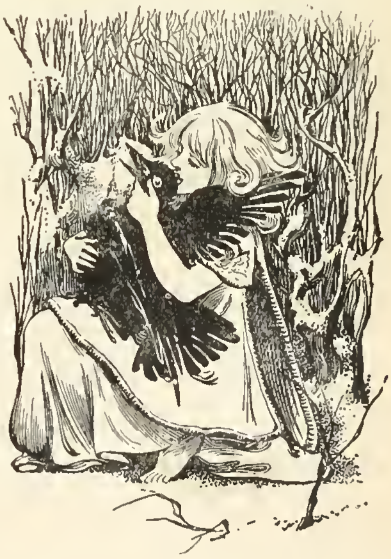
"No, I never learned it," said Gerda; "but my grandmother knows it, and she could speak it too. I wish I had learned it."

"Never mind," said the crow; "I'll tell it as well as I can, though I can't tell it properly." And then he told what he knew.

"In the kingdom where we now are lives a princess, who is desperately clever; it is true she has read and forgotten all the newspapers that exist in the world, so learned is she. Lately, as she was sitting on the throne—which, people say, is not so very agreeable either—she began to sing a song which ran thus:—

'Wherefore shouldn't I marry?'

'Why not, indeed?' added she; and then she determined to marry; only she wished to find a husband who knew how to answer when he was spoken to, and not one who could merely



"NO—HAVE YOU THOUGH?" CRIED THE LITTLE GIRL, AND HAD NEARLY HUGGED THE CROW TO DEATH, SO FONDLY DID SHE KISS HIM.

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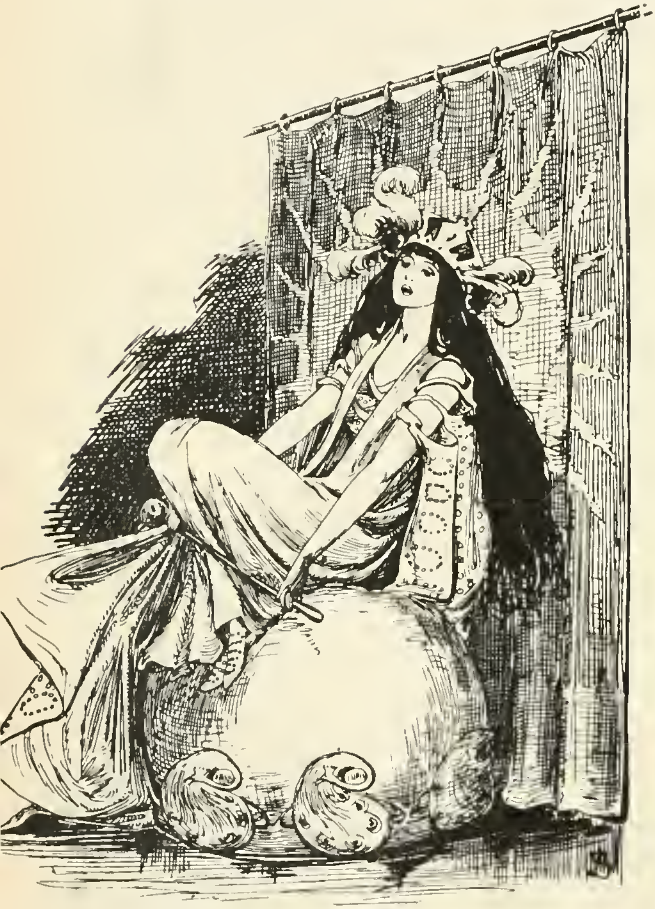
[1] "Crows' language" is a jocose term for a kind of gibberish in use amongst children, and produced by the addition of syllables and letters to each word.

stand and look grand, because that is so tiresome. So she assembled all her ladies-in-waiting by the beat of a drum; and when they heard of her intention, they were much pleased. 'We are glad of it,' said they; 'we had thought of it lately ourselves.' You may believe every word I utter," continued the crow; "for I have a tame sweetheart who hops about the palace, and told me all that passed."

Of course his sweetheart was a crow, for like seeks like, and a crow is sure to choose a crow.

"The newspapers immediately sported a border of hearts with the princess's initials, and proclaimed that every good-looking young man was at liberty to go to the palace, and speak to the princess; and he who could say anything worth hearing would be welcome to the run of the palace; while he who spoke the best would be chosen as a husband for the princess. Yes, yes," continued the crow, "you may believe me: it is every word as true as that I'm sitting here. The people all crowded helter-skelter to the palace, and there was such crushing and pushing; but nobody succeeded either the first or the second day. They could all speak well enough while they were outside in the street, but when they had passed through the palace gate, and came to behold the bodyguards in silver and the lackeys all over gold, standing along the staircase, and the large rooms so finely lighted up, they were quite confounded, And when they approached the throne where sat the princess, they found nothing to say, and could only repeat the last word that she uttered, which she had no mind to hear a second time. It was exactly as if the people inside had taken snuff into their stomachs, and had fallen asleep till they came back into the street and recovered their speech. There was a whole row of them, reaching from the town gate to the palace. I went myself to see them," added the crow. "They were hungry and thirsty, but they did not get as much as a glass of water in the palace. Some of the wisest had, to be sure, taken slices of bread-and-butter with them; but they did not share them with their next neighbour: for each thought, 'Let him look hungry, and then the princess won't have him.'"



SHE BEGAN TO SING A SONG WHICH RAN THUS:—
"WHEREFORE SHOULDN'T I MARRY?"

"But tell me about Kay — little Kay," said Gerda. "When did he come?—and was he amongst the crowd?"

"Stop a bit, we are coming to him presently. On the third day, there came marching cheerfully along towards the palace a little body, who had neither horse nor coach; his eyes sparkled like yours, and he had beautiful long hair, but was shabbily dressed."

"That was Kay!" cried Gerda, in high delight. "Oh, then, I have found him now!" and she clapped her hands for joy.

"He had a little knapsack on his back," said the crow.

"No—it must have been his sledge," said Gerda; "for he went away with his sledge."

"That may be," said the crow; "I was not so particular about it. But this I know from my tame sweetheart, that when he came through the palace gate, and saw the bodyguards all over silver and the lackeys on the stairs all bedizened with gold, he was not the least flustered, but nodded to them, saying: 'It must be very tiresome to stand on the staircase; I prefer going in.' And the rooms were in a blaze of light; privy councillors and excellencies were walking about on their bare feet, and carrying golden vases: it was enough to inspire one with profound respect. His boots creaked so dreadfully loud; but he did not care a fig about that."

"It must be Kay," said Gerda; "I know he had new boots on: I have heard them creak in grandmother's room."

"Yes, they did creak, indeed!" said the crow. "But he went up boldly to the princess, who was sitting on a huge pearl as large as a spinning-wheel; and all the court ladies with their maids, and their maids' maids, and all the lords with their gentlemen, and their gentlemen's gentlemen, who each had a page to attend them, stood all around; and the nearer they stood to the door the prouder they looked. Indeed, one could hardly venture to look at a gentleman's gentleman's page, who always wears slippers, so important an air did each assume as he stood in the doorway."

"It must be quite awful!" said little Gerda; "but did Kay obtain the princess?"

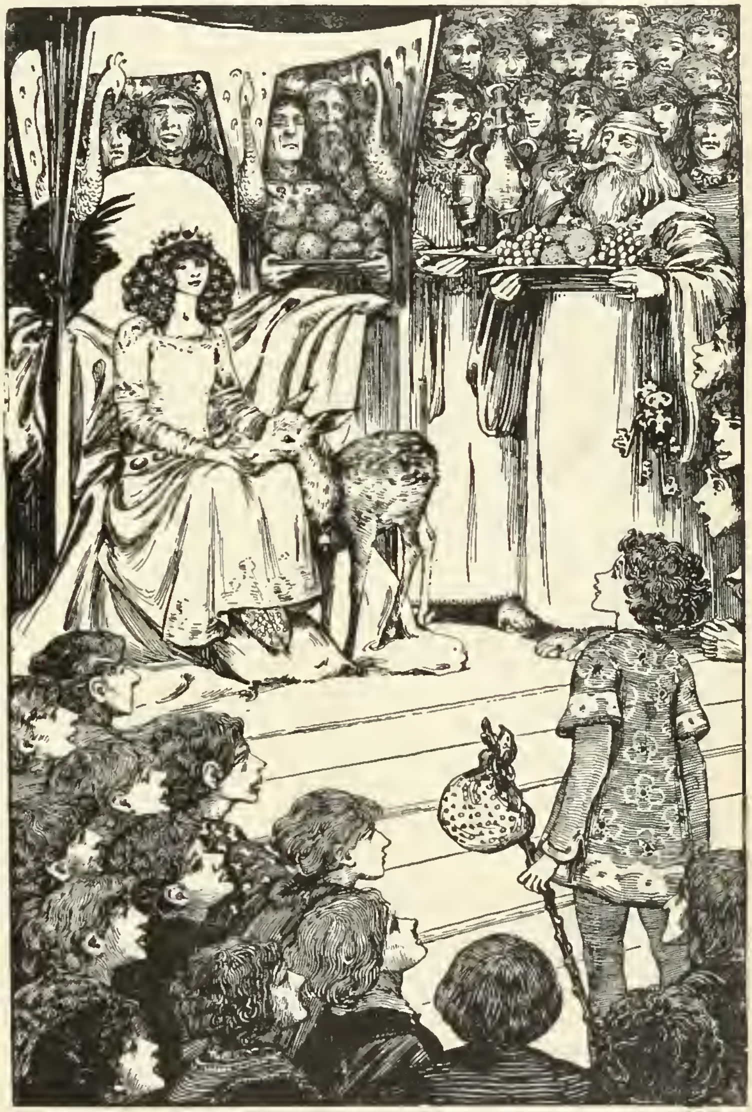
"If I had not been a crow, I would have taken her myself, although I am engaged. He spoke just as well as I do, when I am speaking the crows' language—so I heard from my tame sweetheart. He was cheerful and pleasant; he had not come to woo her, but to see how clever the princess might be: and he was pleased with her, and she with him."

"To be sure, it must be Kay!" said Gerda. "He was so clever; he could reckon by heart even fractions. Oh! will you not take me to the palace?"

"That is easily said," answered the crow; "but how can we manage it? I will, however, speak to my tame sweetheart about it, and she will give us some advice; for I must tell you candidly, a little girl of your sort would never obtain leave to enter the palace."

"Yes, I shall," said Gerda. "When Kay hears that I am there, he will immediately come out to fetch me in."

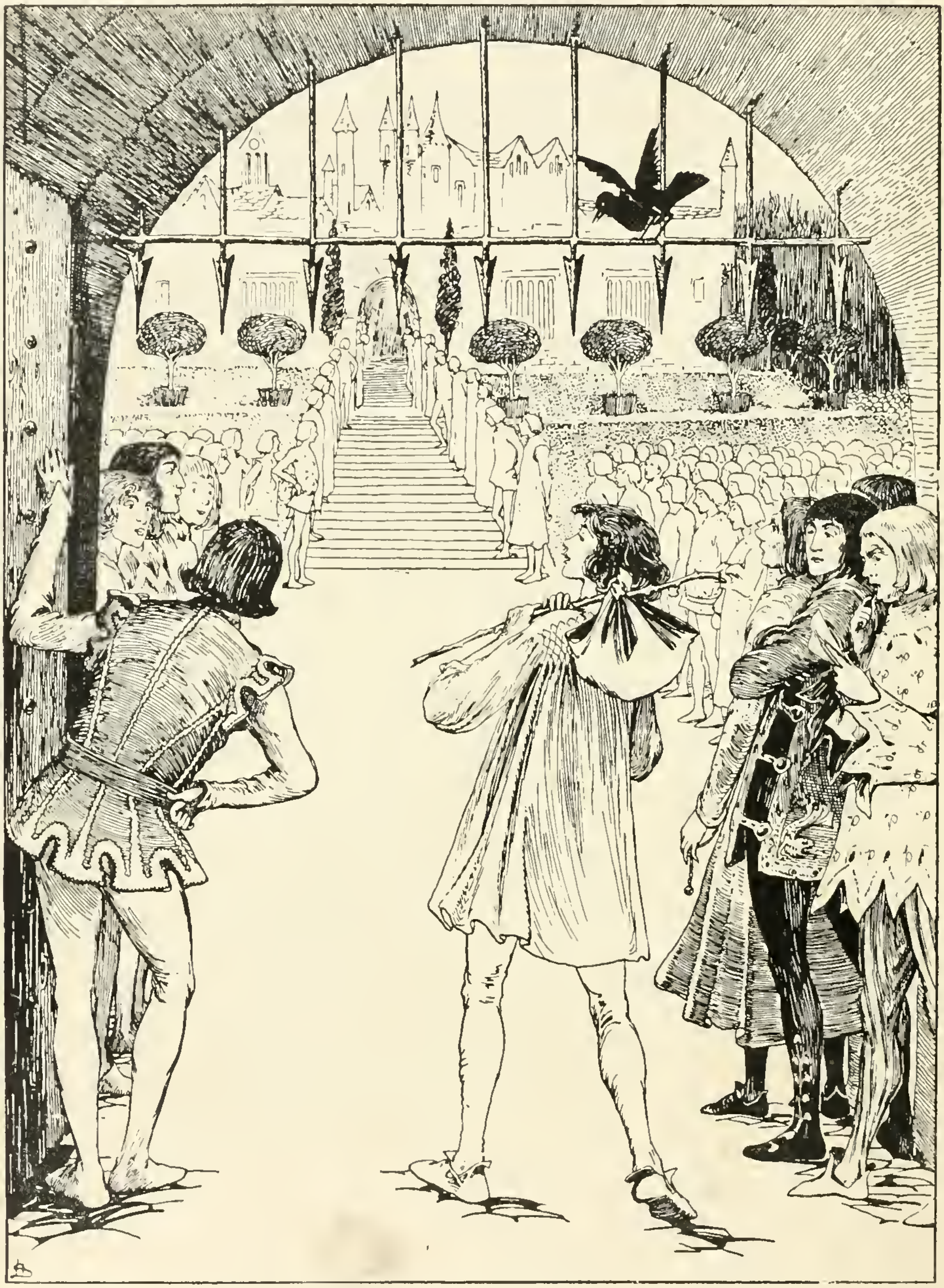
"Wait for me there, near yonder trellis," said the crow, wagging his head as he flew away.



AND WHEN THEY APPROACHED THE THRONE WHERE SAT THE PRINCESS, THEY FOUND NOTHING TO SAY.

It was not till late in the evening that the crow returned. "Caw! caw!" said he. "She sends her love to you, and here is a little roll which she took in the kitchen, on purpose for you. There is bread enough there, and you must be very hungry. It is not possible for you to enter the palace, as you are barefooted: the guards in silver and the footmen in gold would not allow you to pass. But don't cry. We shall manage to get you in. My sweetheart knows a small back-staircase that leads to the bedroom, and she knows where she can find the key."

And they went through the long alley in the garden, where the leaves were falling one after the other; and when the lights in the palace were extinguished one after another, the crow led little Gerda to a back door, that was only fastened with a latch.



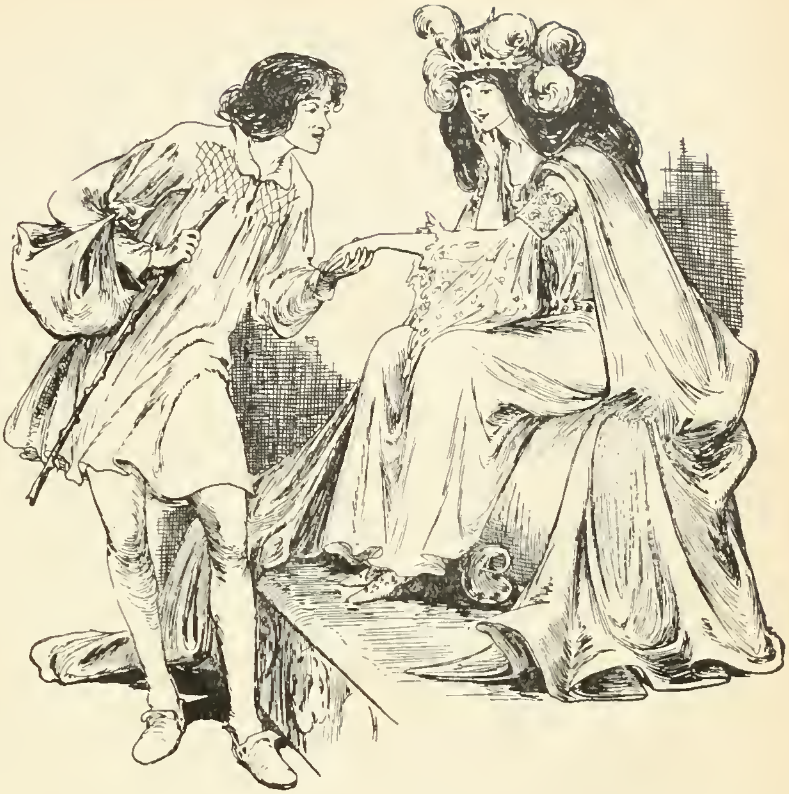
ON THE THIRD DAY, THERE CAME MARCHING CHEERFULLY ALONG TOWARDS THE PALACE A LITTLE BODY WHO HAD NEITHER HORSE NOR COACH.

Oh, how Gerda's heart beat with anxious longing! She felt as if about to do something wrong; yet she only wanted to know whether it was little Kay. "It must be he," thought she, as she pictured to herself his intelligent eyes and his long hair, and fancied she saw him smile as he did formerly, when they used to sit under the roses at home. He would surely be glad to see her, to hear what a long way she had come for his sake, and to know how afflicted they all were, at home, when he did not come back. Oh, how her heart was thrilled with fear and joy!

They were now on the stairs, where a small lamp was burning in a closet. In the middle of the floor stood the tame crow, twisting her head in all directions as she gazed at Gerda, who curtsied, as her grandmother had taught her to do.

"My betrothed has spoken highly of you, my little missy," said the tame crow, "and your story is extremely touching. If you will take the lamp, I will walk before. We will go straight along this way, and then we shall meet no one."

"Somebody seems to be behind us," said Gerda, as a rustling noise went past her, and horses with flying manes and thin legs, whippers-in, and ladies and gentlemen on horseback, all appeared like shadows on the wall.

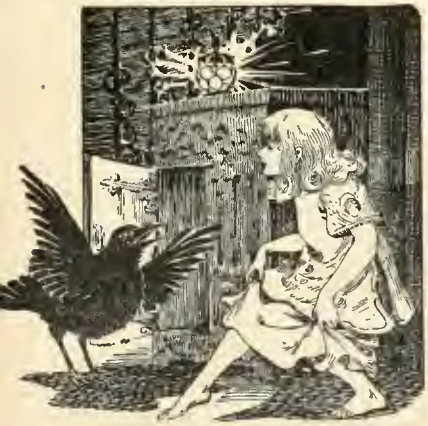


AND HE WAS PLEASED WITH HER, AND SHE WITH HIM.

"They are only dreams," said the crow, "that come and fetch royalty's thoughts to go a-hunting. So much the better, as you can look at them in their beds all the more safely. But I hope when you rise to high honours, you will show a grateful heart."

"Of course," said the crow from the woods.

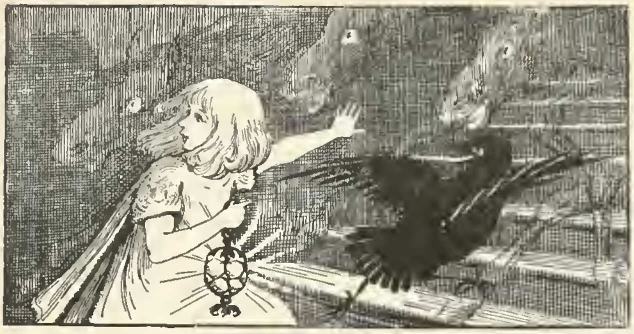
They now entered the first room, that was hung with rose-coloured satin, ornamented with artificial flowers, and where the dreams were already rushing past them; only they went so fast that Gerda could not manage to see the royal personages. Each room was more magnificent than the last—it was enough to bewilder one. Now they reached a bedroom. The ceiling was like a large palm tree, with glass leaves of the most costly crystal; and in the middle of the floor two beds, each resembling a lily, hung from a golden stem; the one in which the princess lay was white, the other was red, and it was in the latter that Gerda went to seek for little Kay. She pushed one of the red leaves aside, and perceived a brown neck. Oh, that must be Kay! She called out his name aloud, and held the lamp over him—the dreams again rushed into the chamber on horseback—he woke, turned his head round, and showed that he was not little Kay.



GAZED AT GERDA, WHO CURTSIED.

The prince's neck alone resembled his; still, he was young and pretty. Then the princess peeped out of the white lily, and asked what was the matter, when little Gerda began to cry, and related her whole story, and all that the crows had done to help her.

"Poor child!" said the prince and princess, praising the crows, and assuring them they were not angry with them, though they were not to make a practice of doing such things, and that they should even be rewarded.



HORSES WITH FLYING MANES . . . APPEARED LIKE SHADOWS ON THE WALL.

"Would you like to have your freedom given you?" asked the princess, "or would you prefer being appointed court crows, and having for your perquisites all the leavings in the kitchen?"

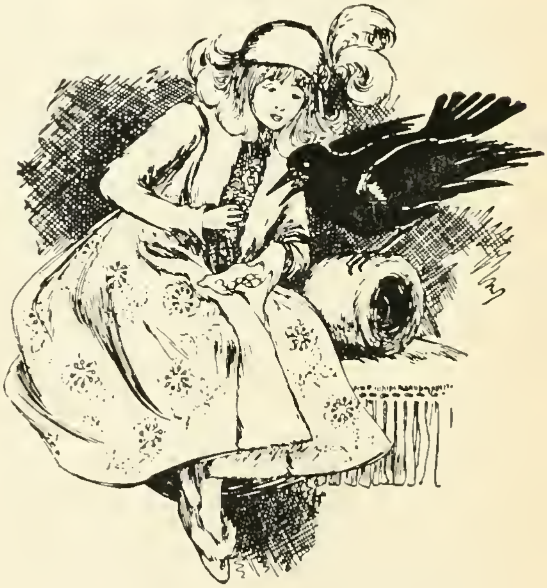
The two crows bowed, and begged leave to have the fixed appointment, for they thought of their old age, and said it would be so comfortable to have a certain provision for their old days, as they called it.

And the prince got out of his bed to give it up to Gerda, and more he could scarcely do. She folded her little hands and thought, "How kind are both human beings and animals!" And then she closed her eyes, and fell into a sweet sleep. All the dreams came flying back into the chamber, looking like angels, and drawing in a little sledge, in which sat Kay, who nodded to her. But it was only a dream, so, of course, it vanished the moment she woke.

On the following day she was dressed in silk and velvet from head to foot, and they offered to let her stop in the palace and enjoy a good time of it; but all she asked for was a little coach and a horse, and a pair of little boots, that she might go into the wide world to look for Kay.

And she not only obtained boots, but a muff; she was elegantly dressed, and on going away she found waiting at the door a new coach of pure gold, with coachman, footmen, and postillions, wearing gold crowns on their heads. The prince and princess themselves helped her into the coach, and wished her every happiness. The wild crow, who was now married, accompanied her for the first three miles, and sat by her side, for he could not bear riding backwards; the tame crow stood in the doorway, flapping her wings, but went no further, because she had been suffering from headache ever since she had had a fixed appointment, and too much to eat. The coach was amply stored inside with sweet cakes, and under the seat were fruit and gingerbread-nuts.

"Farewell! farewell!" cried the prince and princess, and little Gerda wept, and the crow wept. And then after the first few miles the wild crow took leave of her likewise; and his was the saddest leave-taking of all: he perched upon a tree, and flapped his black wings as long as he could see the coach glancing in the bright sunshine.



THE COACH WAS AMPLY STORED INSIDE WITH SWEET CAKES, AND UNDER THE SEAT WERE FRUIT AND GINGERBREAD-NUTS.

Story the Fifth—The Little Robber-Girl

THEY now drove through a gloomy forest; but the coach lit up the way like a torch, and glared in the eyes of some robbers, who could not withstand such a sight.

"It is gold! it is gold!" said they, rushing forward; and seizing hold of the horses, they struck the little jockeys, the coachman and footmen, dead, and dragged little Gerda out of the coach.

"She is fat and nice, and fed with the kernels of nuts," said the old robber woman, who had a long bristly beard, and eyebrows that overshadowed her eyes. "It's as good as a little fat lamb—how nice it will taste!" So saying, she drew forth a shining knife, and most frightfully did it glitter.

"Oh, la!" screamed the woman, whose ear was bitten at that very moment by her own daughter, a froward, naughty girl, who was hanging on her back. "You ugly thing!" said the mother, forgetting to kill Gerda.

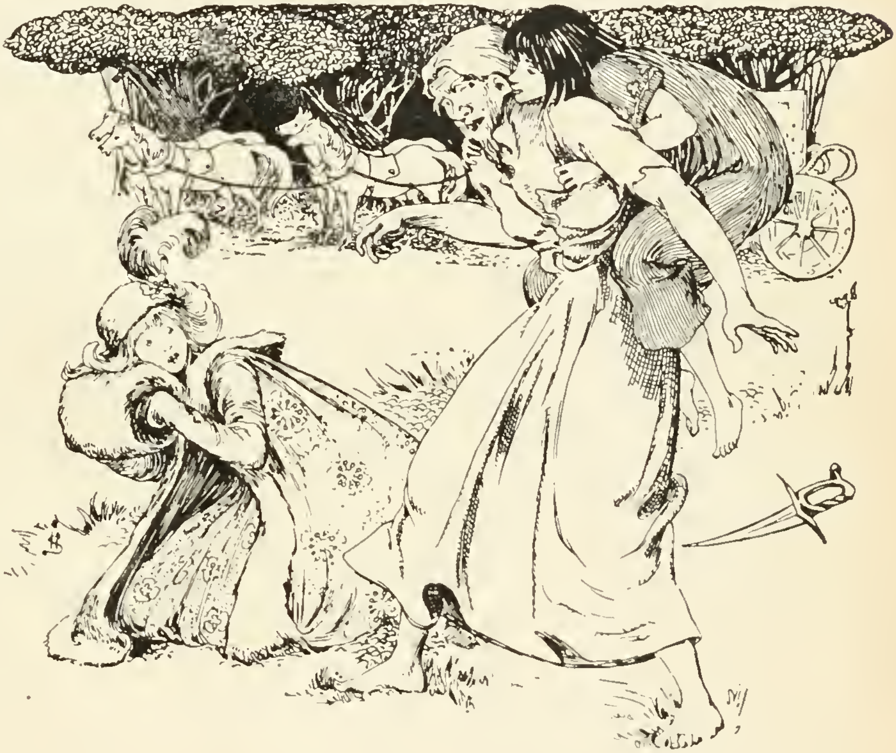
"She shall play with me," said the little robber-girl. "She shall give me her muff and her pretty dress, and sleep with me in my bed." And she bit her mother again, till she leaped into the air, and twirled round again. And all the robbers laughed, saying, "See how she is dancing with her cub!"

"I will take a ride in the coach," said the little robber-girl. And she must, and would, have her way, she was so ill-bred and obstinate. She and Gerda then got in, and away they went into the depths of the wood. The little robber-girl was as big as Gerda, but stronger, with broader shoulders and a darker skin; her eyes were quite black, and she looked almost melancholy. She took little Gerda round the waist, and said: "They shan't kill you, as long as I don't wish you ill. I suppose you are a princess?"

"No," said Gerda, relating her whole history, and how fond she was of little Kay.

The robber-girl looked at her earnestly, and, slightly nodding her head, she said, "They shan't kill you, even if I should wish you ill; for then I'd do it myself." And then she dried Gerda's eyes, and put both her hands into the handsome muff, that was so soft and so warm.

The coach now stopped. They were in the middle of a courtyard belonging to a robber's castle, that was full of crevices from top to bottom. Crows and ravens flew out of the open holes, and great bulldogs, every one of which looked as though it could swallow a whole man, were jumping about, though they did not bark, because it was not allowed.



"OH, LA!" SCREAMED THE WOMAN.

In a large, old, smoky hall a bright fire was burning on the stone floor. The smoke went up to the ceiling, and found an outlet as best it might. Soup was boiling in a large caldron, and hares and rabbits were roasting on spits.

"You shall sleep to-night with me and all my little animals," said the robber-girl. They then had something to eat and drink given them; after which they went into a corner, where straw and carpets were laid on the floor. Upwards of a hundred doves were perched on laths and poles, and were apparently asleep, though they turned round slightly when the two little girls approached.

"They all belong to me," said the little robber-girl; and seizing hold of the one nearest to her, she held it by the feet, and shook it till it flapped its wings. "Kiss it!" cried she, flapping it into Gerda's face. "There sits a rabble of wild doves," continued she, pointing behind a number of staves that were fixed in front of a hole high up in the wall. "Those two are a couple of rascally wild doves, who would fly away directly if they were not kept locked up. And here stands my dear old ba-a!" So saying, she took by the horn a reindeer, who wore a bright brass collar round his neck, and was tied up. "We must keep him pretty tightly too, or else he would give us the slip. I tickle his neck every evening with my sharp knife, which he is vastly afraid of." And the little girl took out a long knife from a cleft in the wall, and drew it slightly across the reindeer's neck. The poor animal began to kick, and the little robber girl laughed, and then drew little Gerda into bed with her.

"Do you mean to keep the knife with you when you are asleep?" asked Gerda, looking at it with some alarm.

"I always sleep with the knife," said the little robber-girl. "One never knows what may happen. But tell me now over again all that you told me about Kay, and why you went out into the wide world."

And Gerda related what she had told before, while the wild doves kept cooing in their cage above, and the other doves slept. The little robber-girl put her arm round Gerda's neck, and held the knife in her other hand, and snored aloud; but Gerda could not close her eyes, not knowing whether she was to live or to be put to death. The robbers sat round the fire, singing and drinking, and the robber woman became quite tipsy. Oh! it was shocking for the little girl to witness such a scene!

Then the wild doves said: "Coo! coo! we have seen little Kay. A white fowl carried his sledge. He sat in the Snow Queen's carriage, which drove right over the forest as we lay in our nests. She blew upon us young ones, who all died except our two selves. Coo! coo!"

"What are you saying up there?" cried Gerda. "Where was the Snow Queen going? Do you know anything about it?"

"She was probably going to Lapland, where there is always snow and ice. Ask the reindeer that is fastened to a rope."

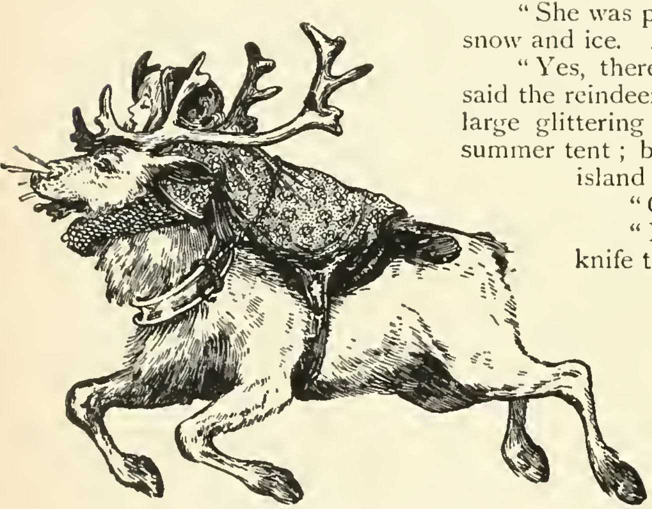
"Yes, there is ice and snow, and a delightful place it is," said the reindeer. "There one can leap about in freedom in the large glittering valleys, and there the Snow Queen pitches her summer tent; but her stronghold lies near the North Pole, on an island called Spitzbergen."

"Oh, Kay! little Kay!" sighed Gerda.

"Lie still," said the robber-girl, "or I'll run the knife through your body!"

Next morning Gerda told her all that the wild doves had said, when the little robber-girl looked serious, though she nodded her head, saying: "That's no matter! that's no matter! Do you know where Lapland lies?" asked she of the reindeer.

"Who can know better than I?" said the animal, while his eyes sparkled. "I was born and brought up there, and I have frisked about on its snow-fields."


BY THAT TIME THEY HAD REACHED LAPLAND.

"Hark!" said the robber-girl to Gerda; "you see that all our men are gone, and only mother remains at home: but towards noon she drinks out of a large bottle, and takes a little nap afterwards, and then I'll do something for you." She now jumped out of bed, took her mother by the neck, pulled her beard, and said, "My own dear mammy! good-morning to you!"

The mother, in return, filliped her nose till it was red and blue; and all this was out of love.

When the mother had drunk freely out of her bottle, and had gone off to sleep, the robber-girl went to the reindeer, and said: "I should like vastly to tickle you many times more with the sharp knife, for then you make yourself so ridiculous; but never mind, I will untie your rope and help you out, that you may run off to Lapland. But you must put your best leg foremost, to carry this little girl to the Snow Queen's palace, where she will find her playfellow. You have heard all she told, for she spoke loud enough, and you were listening."

The reindeer jumped for joy. The robber-girl lifted little Gerda on to the animal, and took the precaution to bind her fast, and even to give her a little cushion to sit upon.

"And there are your fur boots," said she, "for it is getting cold; but as to the muff, I shall keep that, it is so pretty. Yet you shan't be frozen by the cold, either; here are my mother's large mittens, which will reach to your elbows. Creep into them. Now your hands look just like my mother's."

And Gerda wept for joy.

"I don't like to see you whimpering," said the little robber-girl; "you ought now to look pleased. Here are a couple of loaves and a ham, so now you won't starve." These were fastened to the reindeer, and then the little robber-girl opened the doors, enticed all the dogs into the house, and, lastly, cut the rope that bound the reindeer with her sharp knife, saying to him, "Now, run away; but take good care of the little girl."

And Gerda stretched forth her hands, in the large mittens, towards the robber-girl, and bid her farewell, and then away the reindeer flew, through thick and thin, across the wide forest, over bogs and steppes, as quick as he could fly. The wolves howled and ravens screeched. "Fizz! fizz!" said the sky, as if it were sneezing red.

"There's my old friend the aurora borealis!" cried the reindeer; "see how it shines!" And he ran still faster, both day and night. The loaves were eaten, and the ham too, and by that time they had reached Lapland.

Story the Sixth—The Laplander and the Finlander

THEY stopped in front of a miserable-looking little house, whose roof reached down to the ground, and whose door was so low that the family were obliged to creep on all-fours when they wanted to go out or in. Nobody was at home just then but an old Laplandish woman, who was cooking fish by the light of a train-oil lamp, and the reindeer told her Gerda's whole story, after having first told his own—which seemed to him far the more important of the two; and Gerda was so benumbed with the cold that she could not speak a word.

"Why, you poor creatures," said the Laplander, "you have still a long way to go. You must go a hundred miles into Finland; for it is there the Snow Queen lives in the summer, and burns Bengal lights every evening. I will write a few words on a dried stock-fish, for I have no paper, and give it you for the Finlandish woman up there, and she will direct you better than I can."

And when Gerda was warmed, and had eaten and drunk, the Laplandish woman wrote a few words on a dried stock-fish, and, telling Gerda to take good care of it, tied her once more upon the reindeer, who made off with great speed.

"Fizz! fizz!" said the air, and during the whole night there shone the prettiest blue aurora borealis. And then they reached Finland, and knocked at the chimney of the Findlandish woman, for door she had none.

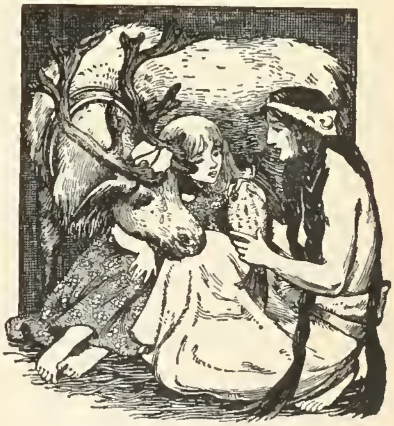
It was so terribly hot within that their hostess had scarcely any clothes on her back. She was small and dirty-looking. She immediately loosened little Gerda's dress, and took off her mittens and boots, or else she would have been oppressed by the heat, and put a lump of ice on the reindeer's head, and then read what was written on the stock-fish. After perusing it three times she knew its contents by heart, and then put the stock-fish into the saucepan where the broth was cooking, as it was fit to be eaten, and she never wasted anything.

The reindeer now related first his own story and then little Gerda's, and the Finlandish woman's intelligent eyes twinkled, though she said nothing.

"As you are so wise," said the reindeer, "that you can bind all the winds in the world with a bit of thread, so that if a seaman loosens one knot it will bring him a fair wind, and if he loosens another there will blow a stiff gale, and by untying a third and fourth he could raise a hurricane that would overthrow forests—cannot you give this little girl a potion to endow her with the power of twelve men, so that she should conquer the Snow Queen?"

"The power of twelve men!" said the Finlandish woman; "that would be of much use, indeed!" and then she went to a shelf, and took down a large skin roll, which she unfurled, and upon which she read strange characters, till the perspiration trickled down from her forehead.

But the reindeer begged so hard for little Gerda, and she looked at the Finlandish woman with such tearful and entreating



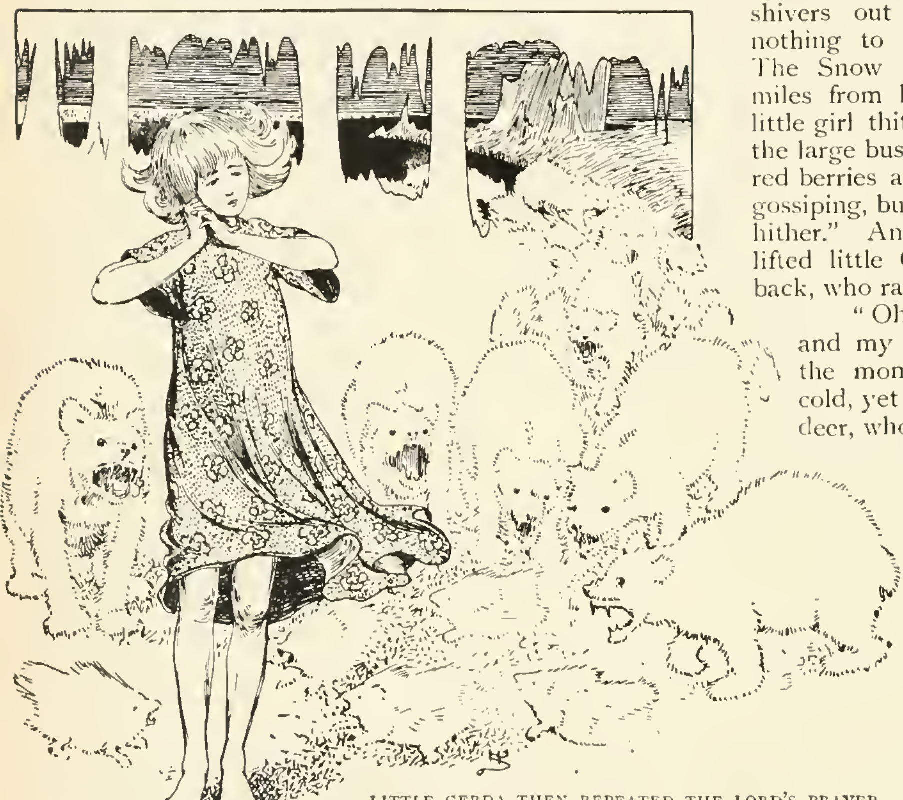
THE FINLANDISH WOMAN'S INTELLIGENT EYES TWINKLED, THOUGH SHE SAID NOTHING.

eyes, that the eyes of the latter began to twinkle, and taking the reindeer into a corner she whispered into his ear, as she laid a fresh lump of ice on his head,—

"Little Kay is sure enough with the Snow Queen, and finds everything in her palace so much to his taste and his liking that he thinks it the finest place in the world; but this comes of his having a glass fragment in his heart and a little speck of glass in his eye. They must be removed, or else he'll never be a human being again, and the Snow Queen will retain her power over him.

"But can't you give little Gerda something that shall endow her with power over all these things?"

"I can't give her any greater power than she already possesses; do you not see how great it already is? Do you not see how men and animals must serve her, and how she has come on in the world with bare feet? She can't receive any power from us; its seat is in her heart, and consists in her being such a dear, innocent child as she is. If she can't gain access to the Snow Queen by her own means, and remove the glass shivers out of little Kay, we can do nothing to bring about such a result. The Snow Queen's garden begins two miles from hence. You can carry the little girl thither, and set her down near the large bush, which stands covered with red berries amidst the snow. Don't stay gossiping, but make haste and come back hither." And then the Finlandish woman lifted little Gerda on to the reindeer's back, who ran off as fast as he could.



LITTLE GERDA THEN REPEATED THE LORD'S PRAYER.

"Oh, I have forgotten my boots and my mittens!" cried little Gerda the moment she was in the biting cold, yet she dared not stop the reindeer, who ran till he reached the bush with the red berries, where he set down Gerda and kissed her mouth, while large, bright tears trickled down the animal's cheeks, and away he ran back. There stood poor Gerda without shoes or gloves in the middle of dreary, icy cold Finland.

She ran forwards as quick as she could, when she was met by a whole regiment of snow-flakes; which did not, however, fall from the sky, that was bright and lit up by an aurora borealis, but ran along the ground, and grew bigger the nearer they approached. Gerda remembered how large and artfully-fashioned snow-flakes looked when she saw them through a burning-glass. But here they were far larger and more alarming, for they were alive; they were the Snow Queen's outguards, and were of the oddest shapes. Some looked like ugly, large porcupines; others like a knot of serpents, with their heads poking out; others again like thick little bears, with bristling hairs. All were dazzlingly white, and all were living snow-flakes.

Little Gerda then repeated the Lord's Prayer, while the cold was so intense that she could see her own breath, which came out of her mouth like so much smoke. These clouds of breath became thicker, and took the shape of little angels, who grew larger the moment they touched the earth; and all wore helmets on their heads, and carried spears and shields in their hands. Their numbers kept increasing, and by the time Gerda had finished her prayer a whole legion of them surrounded her, and they pierced the frightful snow-flakes with their spears till they shivered them into a hundred pieces, and little Gerda went on in safety and in good spirits. The angels stroked her hands and feet, so that she felt the cold less, and hastened on to the Snow Queen's castle. But now we must see what Kay is after. In truth he was not thinking of little Gerda at all, much less of her being outside the castle at that very moment.

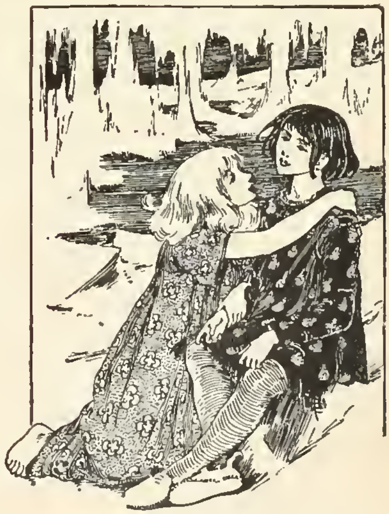
Story the Seventh

Of the Snow Queen's Castle, and What Took Place in it Later

THE walls of the castle were made of drifted snow, and the windows and doors were made of biting winds. There were above a hundred rooms in it, just as the snow had blown them together; the largest was several miles long. They were all lit up by the vivid aurora borealis, and they were so large, so empty, so icy cold, and so glittering! No festivities were ever held there; not so much as a little ball for bears, to which the tempest might have played tunes, and where the bears might have danced on their hind legs and shown their good breeding; nor even a game of hot cockles, nor a gossiping coffee party for white fox spinsters: the Snow Queen's halls were empty, cold, and dreary. The aurora borealis shone so plain throughout the castle that one could reckon when it stood at the highest or the lowest point in the heavens. In the middle of this empty and endless snow-hall lay a frozen lake, that was broken into a thousand pieces, only each piece was so like the other that it formed a complete work of art; and in the centre of the lake sat the Snow Queen, when she was at home, and then she said she was sitting on the mirror of reason, which was the best and only one in the world.

Little Kay was quite blue, nay, almost black with cold; but he did not perceive it, for she had kissed away his shivering feelings, and his heart was like a lump of ice. He was dragging about some sharp, flat pieces of ice, and placing them in all manner of ways, for he wanted to make something out of them. It was just as when we make use of little wooden squares and triangles to compose figures, which we call a Chinese puzzle. Kay, too, was making figures, and very clever ones. This was the ice-game of reason. In his eyes the figures were very remarkable, and of the highest importance—owing to the little glass shiver that still stuck in his eye. He composed complete figures that formed a written word, but he never could manage to form the word he wanted, which was "Eternity." And the Snow Queen had said, "If you can find out this figure you shall then be your own master, and I'll give you the whole world, besides a new pair of skates." But he could not accomplish it.

"Now I will rush off to warm lands," said the Snow Queen; "I will go and look into the black pipkins." It was the volcanoes Etna and Vesuvius that she designated in this manner. "I will whiten them a bit! It will be good for them, and benefit the lemons and grapes." And away the Snow Queen flew, and Kay remained all alone in the large ice-hall that was so many miles long, and kept looking at the pieces of ice, and thinking and thinking till his head was ready to split; and he sat so stiff and so motionless that one might have thought he was frozen.



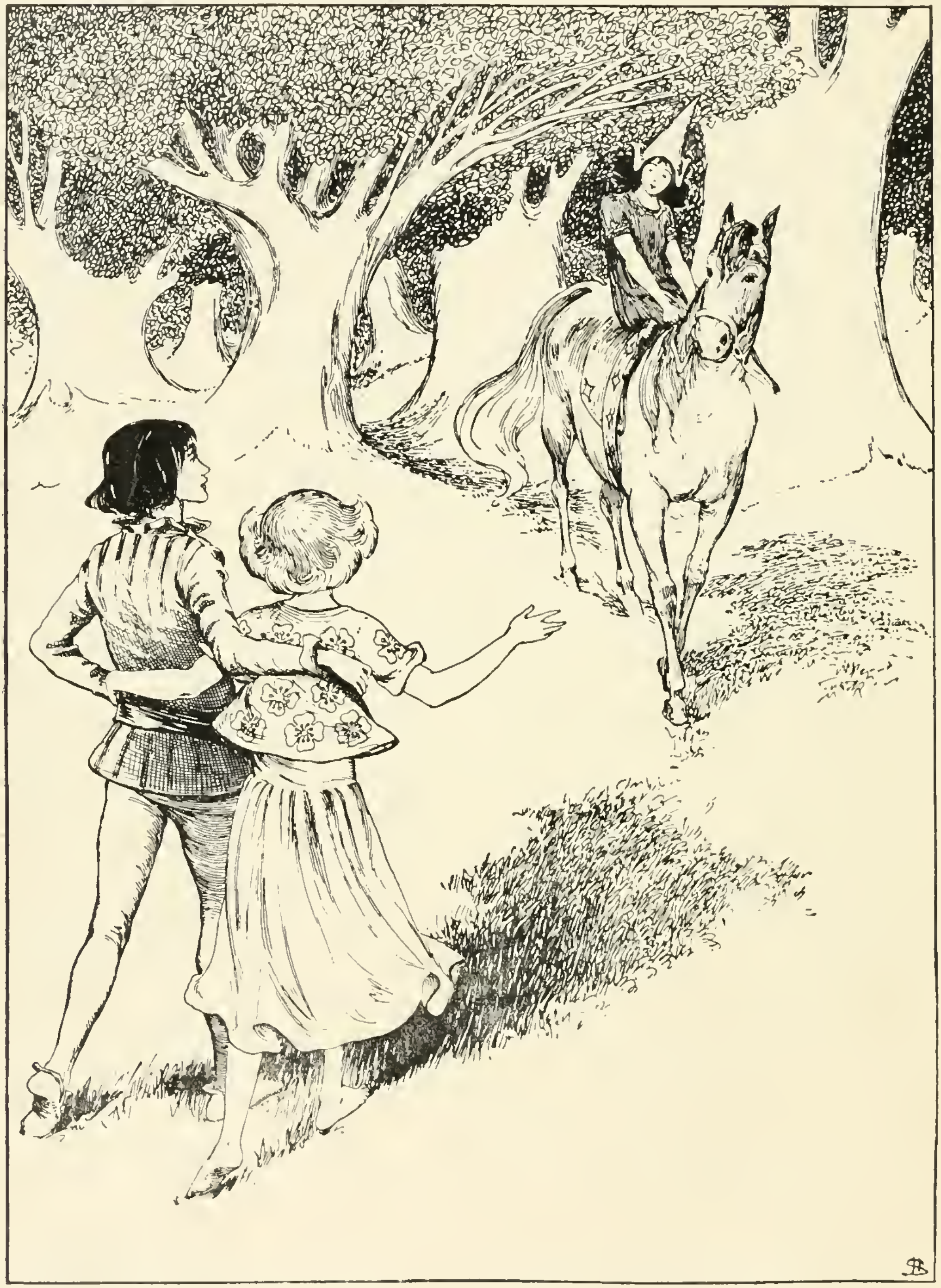
BUT HE SAT QUITE MOTIONLESS, STIFF AND COLD.

Just then it happened that little Gerda came through the large gate into the castle. Cutting winds were raging within, but she said an evening prayer, and the winds abated as if they were going to sleep; and she entered the large, empty, cold rooms, and there she beheld Kay. She immediately recognised him, and flew to embrace him, and held him fast while she exclaimed, "Kay! dear little Kay! So I have found you at last."

But he sat quite motionless, stiff, and cold; and then little Gerda shed warm tears that fell upon his breast, and penetrated to his heart, and melted the lump of ice, and washed away the little glass fragment at the same time. He looked at her while she sang,—

> "The roses bloom but one short hour, then die,
> But th' infant Jesus ever lives on high."

Then Kay burst into tears, and he cried so abundantly that the little bit of glass swam out of his eye when he recognised her, and exclaimed joyously, "Gerda! dear little Gerda! Where have you stayed away so long? And where have I been?" And he looked all about him. "How cold it is here! How large and empty it all seems!" And he clung to Gerda, who laughed and cried for joy; and the scene was so



THERE EMERGED FROM IT A BEAUTIFUL HORSE . . . MOUNTED BY A GIRL WEARING A SHINING RED CAP, AND WITH PISTOLS IN HER BELT.

moving that even the pieces of ice jumped about for joy: and when they were tired and lay down again, they formed themselves into the very letters the Snow Queen had said he must find out before he could become his own master, and she would make him a present of the whole world and a pair of new skates.

Then Gerda kissed his cheeks, and the bloom returned to them; she kissed his eyes, and they beamed like hers; she kissed his hands and feet, and he became healthy and cheerful. The Snow Queen might now come home if she pleased, for there stood his letters-patent of freedom, written in glittering pieces of ice.

And they took each other by the hand and walked out of the castle, and talked of grandmamma and of the roses on the roof; and wherever they went the winds were laid to rest, and the sun shone forth. And when they reached the bush with red berries they found the reindeer waiting for them, accompanied by a younger reindeer, whose udders were full of warm milk, which she gave the children to drink, and then kissed their mouths. They then carried Kay and Gerda to the Finlandish woman, where they warmed themselves thoroughly in the hot room, and obtained directions about their journey homewards, and next to the Laplandish woman, who had made new clothes for them and set their sledge in order.

The reindeer and his companion ran beside them, and followed them to the frontiers of the land, where the first green shoots were to be seen; and here the little travellers took leave of the reindeer and of their Laplandish hostess. "Farewell!" was said on all sides. And the first little birds began to twitter, and the forest was full of green buds; and there emerged from it a beautiful horse (that Gerda recognised as having belonged to the golden coach), mounted by a girl wearing a shining red cap, and with pistols in her belt. This was the little robber-girl, who was tired of staying at home and was going first to the north, and then, if that did not suit her, to some other part of the world. She and Gerda instantly recognised each other, and delighted they were to meet.

"You are a pretty fellow to have gone a-gadding in such a manner," said she to little Kay; "I wonder whether you deserve that anybody should have taken the trouble to run to the world's end for your sake."

But Gerda patted her cheeks, and asked after the prince and princess.

"They are travelling in foreign lands," said the robber-girl.

"And what is become of the crow?" said Gerda.

"He is dead," returned she. "His tame sweetheart is become a widow, and wears a bit of black woollen thread round her leg. She makes great lamentations, but it's all mere stuff. But now tell me how you fared, and how you managed to get him back."

Then Gerda and Kay related all that had taken place. "Snip-snap-snorum!" said the robber-girl, who shook their hands and promised, should she ever pass through their town, that she would pay them a visit, and then she rode forth into the wide world. Meantime, Kay and Gerda walked on hand in hand, and the farther they went the lovelier the spring appeared with its flowers and verdure; the church bells were ringing, and they recognised the tall steeples and the large town where they lived; and they entered it, and found their way to their grandmother's door, then up the stairs and into the room, where all looked the same as it used to do. The clock was still going "tick-tack!" and the hands were pointing to the hour; but, as they passed through the doorway, they perceived they were now grown-up. The roses on the roof were in full bloom and peeping in at the open window; and there stood their little chairs which they used as children, upon which Kay and Gerda now sat down, each on their own, holding each other by the hand, while the cold, empty splendour of the Snow Queen's palace vanished from their thoughts like a painful dream. The grandmother sat in God's bright sunshine, reading aloud the following passage in the Bible: "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

And Kay and Gerda exchanged looks, and they now understood the meaning of the old hymn:—

"The roses bloom but one short hour, then die,
But th' infant Jesus ever lives on high."

And there they both sat—grown-up, yet children still, for they were children in their hearts; and it was summer—warm, glorious summer!

* * *

The Fellow-Traveller

POOR Johannes was sorely afflicted, for his father was ill, past all hope of recovery. Besides their two selves, not a soul was present in the little room. The lamp on the table was flickering, and it was late at night.

"You have been a good son, Johannes," said the sick father, "and God will, no doubt, help you on in the world." And he gazed at him with mild and thoughtful eyes, fetched a deep sigh, and then died—though he only looked as if he had gone to sleep. But Johannes wept; for now he had nobody in the wide world—neither father, mother, sister, nor brother. Poor Johannes! He knelt down beside the bed, kissed his dead father's hand, and shed many, many bitter tears! But at length his eyes closed, and he fell asleep against the hard bed-post.

He had then a strange dream. He thought the sun and moon came down to him, and he saw his father again in full health and freshness, and heard him laugh as he used to do when he was pleased. A pretty girl, with a gold crown on her long, shining hair, presented her hand to him; and his father said: "Look what a bride you have won. She is the loveliest maid upon earth." He then woke, and all these fine things vanished; his father lay dead and cold in his bed, and nobody was near them. Poor Johannes!

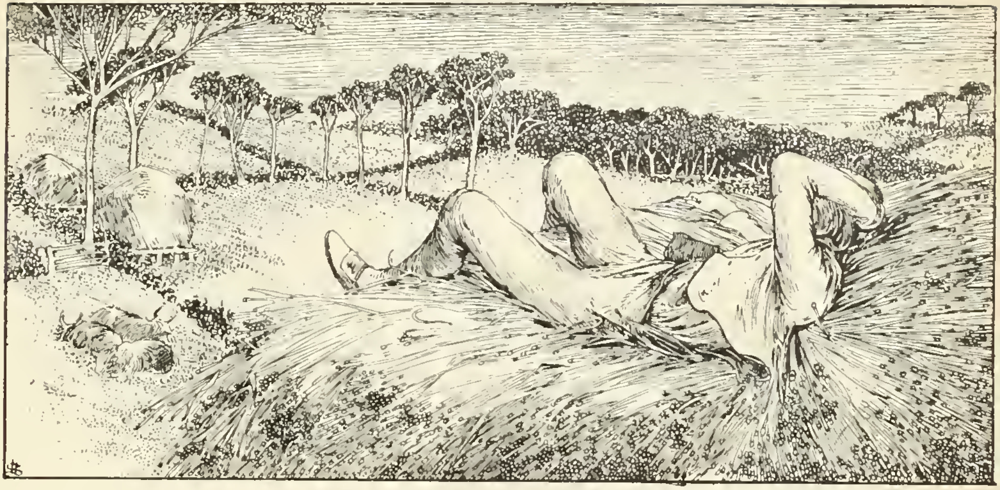
In the following week, the dead man was buried. The son followed close behind the coffin, for he was never again to behold the father who had loved him so dearly. He heard them fling the earth down upon the coffin, and still saw a little corner of it left; but, at the next shovelful, even that disappeared. Then he felt as though his heart would break, so afflicted was he. They sang a psalm round the grave, and it sounded so beautiful that it brought tears into Johannes' eyes. He wept, and felt relieved. The sun shone down gloriously on the green trees, just as if it meant to say: "You must not be so mournful, Johannes. Look how beautifully blue the sky is yonder! Your father is up above, and is begging of the All-merciful that you may thrive at all times!"

"I will always be good," said Johannes, "then I shall join my father in heaven; and what joy it will be to meet him again! How much I shall have to tell him, and how much he will have to teach me about the delights of heaven, just as he used to teach me here on earth. Oh, what joy that will be!"

He fancied it all so plainly that he smiled, while the tears still ran down his cheeks. The birds in the chestnut trees kept twittering, "Twit! twit!" They were gay, although they had been at the funeral; but they knew that the dead man was now in heaven, and had wings much larger and more beautiful than their own; and that he was happy, because he had been good here on earth: and, therefore, they were pleased. Johannes saw how they flew from the green trees out into the wide world, and then he wished to fly away also. But he first cut out a large wooden cross to place on his father's grave; and when he brought it thither in the evening, he found the grave decked with gravel and flowers. This had been done by strangers, who all esteemed the worthy man who had gone to his last home.

Early the next morning, Johannes packed up his little bundle, and put into his girdle his whole legacy, consisting of fifty dollars and a couple of silver shillings, with which he meant to wander forth into the world. But first of all he repaired to his father's grave in the churchyard, where he repeated the Lord's Prayer, and then said, "Farewell!"

Abroad in the fields through which he passed, all the flowers looked fresh and lovely in the warm sunshine. And they nodded in the wind, just as if they meant to say: "Welcome to the greenwood! Is it not delightful here?" But Johannes turned round to give a last look at the old church, in which he was christened as an infant, and where he used to go with his father every Sunday to hear the service, and to sing his psalm; and in so doing he perceived, in one of the upper loopholes of the church tower, the little goblin belonging to it, who stood with his little pointed, red cap on his head, shading his countenance with his arm, so that the sun might not



THE FIRST NIGHT HE WAS OBLIGED TO LIE ON A HAYCOCK IN THE OPEN FIELDS.

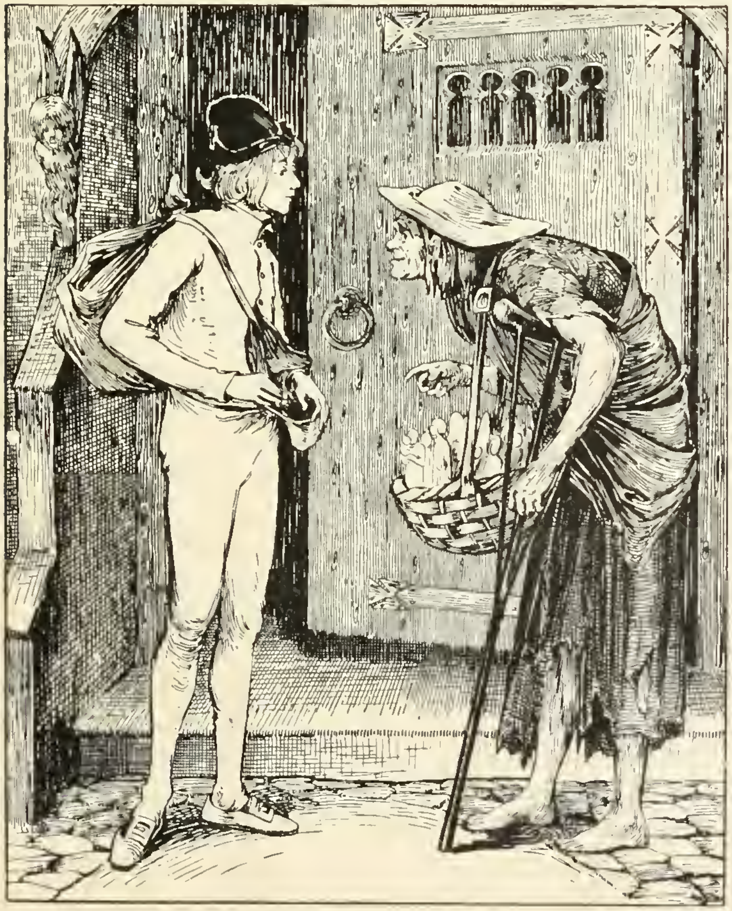
stream into his eyes. Johannes nodded farewell to him; and the little goblin waved his red cap, laid his hand on his heart, and then kissed his hand to him, to show that he was kindly disposed towards him, and wished him a happy journey.

Johannes now thought of how many beautiful things he should see in the wide world, so large and so magnificent as it was; and he went on and on much further than he had ever been before. He did not know the places through which he passed, nor the people whom he met. He was now abroad in a foreign land.

The first night he was obliged to lie on a haycock in the open fields, for he had no other bed. But this he thought was so nice a bed that the king himself could not be better off. The field, and the haycock, with the blue sky above, certainly formed a very pretty bedchamber. The green grass, dotted with little red and white flowers, was the carpet; the elder bushes and hedges of wild roses were the nosegays that decorated the room; and his washing-basin was the brook, with its clear, pure waters, where the reeds were nodding to bid him good-night and good-morning. The moon was a large lamp, high up in the blue ceiling, and one that could not set fire to the curtains. Johannes might sleep in peace, and he did so; nor did he wake till the sun rose, and all the little birds around were singing: "Good-morrow! Good-morrow! Are you not yet up?"

The bells were ringing for church, for it was Sunday. The people were going to hear the preacher, and Johannes followed them, sang a psalm, and heard the word of God. He felt just as if he were in his own parish church, in which he had been christened, and where he sang psalms with his father.

In the churchyard were several



BEFORE THE CHURCH DOOR STOOD AN AGED BEGGAR, LEANING ON A CRUTCH.

graves, some of which were overgrown with very high grass. And he thought how his father's grave would grow to look the same in the end, as he would not be there to weed it and deck it. So he fell to work and tore up the grass, and set up the wooden crosses that had fallen down, and replaced the wreaths that had been blown away by the wind, thinking all the time, "Perhaps some one is doing the same for my father's grave, as I am unable to take care of it."

Before the church door stood an aged beggar, leaning on a crutch. Johannes gave him his silver shillings, and then went forth on his way, lighter and happier than he had felt before.

Towards evening there arose a violent storm, which made him hasten to find a shelter. Darkness soon came on; but at length he reached a small and lonely church that stood on a little hill.

"I will sit down in a corner," said he, as he went in; "I am so tired that I need rest." He then sat down, and folded his hands, and said his evening prayer; and before he perceived it, he was fast asleep, and dreaming, while a thunder-storm was raging abroad.

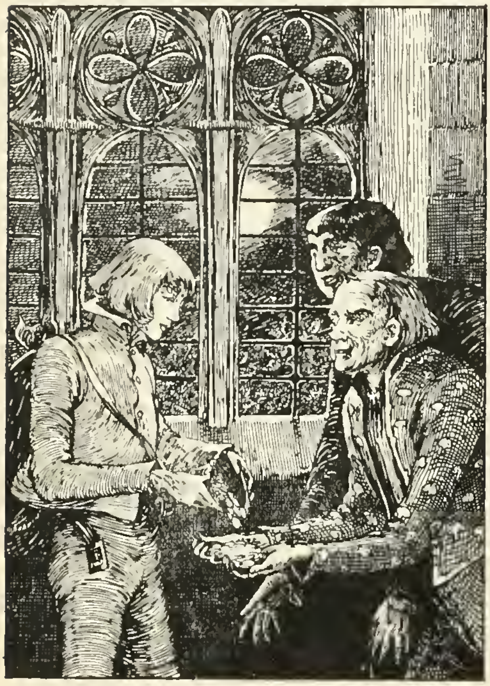
When he awoke, it was in the middle of the night, but the fearful storm was over, and the moon shone in through the window to greet him. In the middle of the church stood an open coffin, in which lay the body of a man, that was awaiting burial. Johannes was not fearful, for he had a good conscience; and, besides, he knew that the dead never injure any one. It is only living, wicked men that do any harm. Two such bad characters stood beside the dead man that was lying in the church awaiting burial, and they wanted to vent their spite, by not letting him rest in his coffin, and casting his poor body outside the church door.

"Why do you want to do so?" asked Johannes. "It would be very wicked. In Christ's name, let him rest in peace!"

"Oh, stuff and nonsense!" said the two hideous men; "he has taken us in. He owed us money, and couldn't pay it; and now he is dead into the bargain, and we shan't recover a penny! Therefore we will take our revenge, and he shall lie outside the church door like a dog."

"I have nothing in the world but fifty dollars," said Johannes, "which form my whole patrimony; yet will I willingly give them to you, provided you promise truly to leave the dead man in peace. I shall manage without the money. I have strong and healthy limbs, and a merciful God will assist me in times of need!"

"Of course," said the ugly men, "if you pay his debt, we will neither of us lay a finger upon him—that you may depend upon." And hereupon they took the money which he gave them, laughed aloud at his simple good nature, and went their ways. Then he laid the body carefully back into the coffin, folded the dead man's hands, took leave of him, and continued his way through a large forest, in a contented frame of mind.



"OF COURSE," SAID THE UGLY MEN, "IF YOU PAY HIS DEBT, WE WILL NEITHER OF US LAY A FINGER UPON HIM."

All around him, wherever the moon shone through the trees, he saw numbers of elegant little elves at play. His presence did not disturb them, for they knew him to be a good and harmless son of the earth; for it is only bad people who are not privileged to see the elves. Some of them were not taller than the breadth of one's finger, and wore their long yellow hair fastened up with gold combs. They were rocking themselves, two by two, on the large dew-drops that sparkled on the leaves and the tall grass. Now and then the drop would roll away, and down they fell between the long blades, occasioning a deal of laughter and merriment amongst the tiny folk. It was a pretty sight. Then they sang, and Johannes recognised distinctly all the pretty songs he had learned as a little boy. Large speckled spiders, with silver crowns upon their heads, were set to build suspension bridges and palaces from one hedge to another, which, when spangled by the dew, glittered like glass in the moonshine. These frolics continued till sunrise, when the little elves crept into the flower-buds and the wind took possession of their bridges and palaces, which were tossed upon the air as cobwebs.

Johannes had just left the forest, when the full-toned voice of a man cried out to him, "Ho there, comrade! whither are you going?"

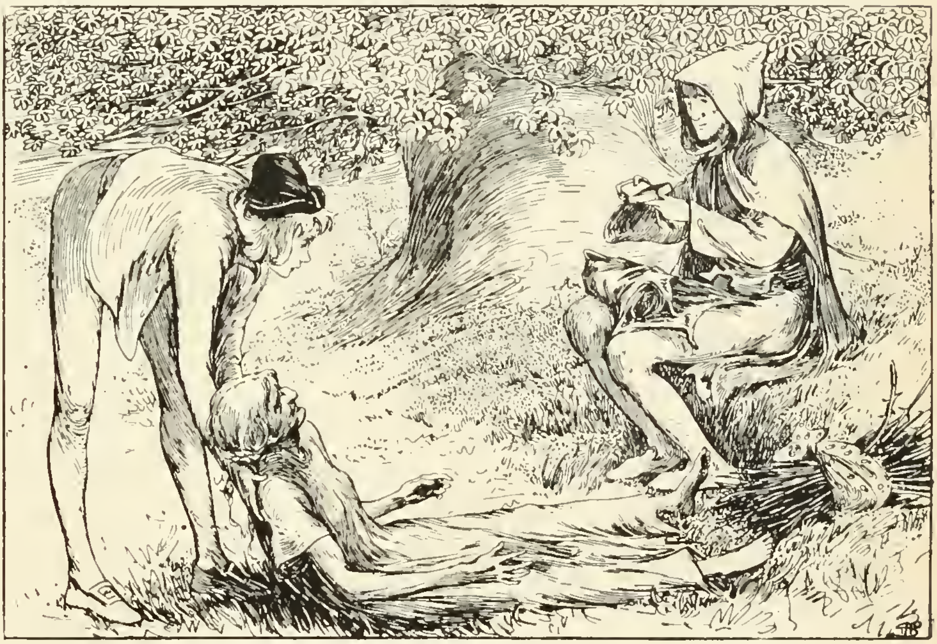
"Into the wide world," said he. "I have neither father nor mother, and am a poor boy; but the Lord will help me in time of need."

"I am likewise going into the wide world," said the stranger. "Shall we keep each other company?"

"Willingly," said he; and so they walked on together. They soon felt a mutual liking for each other, for both were good; only Johannes soon found out that the stranger was much wiser than himself. He had travelled throughout nearly the whole world, and could tell of everything that existed.

The sun was already high when they sat down under a tree to eat their breakfast, just as an old woman was coming up to them. She was very aged, and almost bent double, and supported herself on a crutch-stick, while she carried on her back a bundle of firewood, which she had gathered in the forest. Her apron was tucked up, and Johannes saw three large rods of fern and willow-twigs peeping out at each end. When she was quite close to our travellers, her foot slipped, and she fell with a loud scream, for she had broken her leg—poor old woman!

Johannes at once proposed that they should carry the old woman home; but the stranger opened his knapsack, and took out a box, saying that he had an ointment which would immediately make her leg whole again, and so strong that she would be able to walk home by herself, just as if the accident had never happened; only he required that she should give him in return the three rods she carried in her apron.



TOOK OUT A BOX, SAYING THAT HE HAD AN OINTMENT WHICH WOULD IMMEDIATELY MAKE HER LEG WHOLE AGAIN.

"That would be well paid," said the old woman, nodding her head in a peculiar manner. She did not like giving up the rods; but, on the other hand, it was still more disagreeable to be lying there with a broken limb. So she gave him the rods, and the moment he had rubbed her leg with the ointment the old dame got up, and walked much better than before. Such were the effects of the ointment; and truly it was not of a sort to be purchased at the apothecary's.

"What do you want with these rods?" asked Johannes of his fellow-traveller.

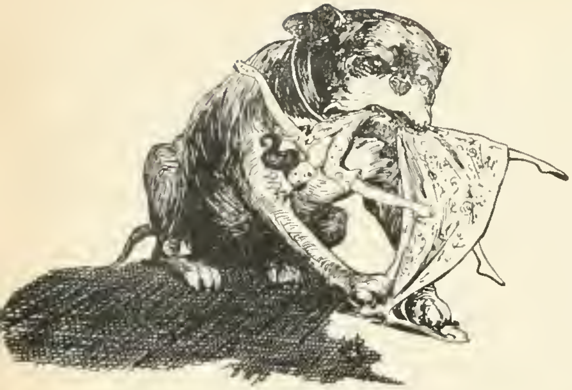
"They are three very pretty herb-brooms," said he, "and I like them, because I am a foolish fellow."

They then went on a good deal further.

"Look how overcast the sky appears!" said Johannes, pointing before them. "Those are frightfully heavy clouds."

"No," said his fellow-traveller "they are not clouds; they are mountains—fine, large mountains—at the top of which one may overlook the clouds, and breathe fresh air. And delightful it is. believe me, to stand there! To-morrow we shall assuredly be far out in the wide world."

But they were not so near as they looked, and it took a full day before they had reached the mountains, where the black forests were towering up to the sky, and where blocks of stone might be found as huge as a large town. It seemed a somewhat difficult undertaking to cross them;



SEIZED THE QUEEN BY THE MIDDLE OF HER SLENDER WAIST, SO THAT IT CRACKED AGAIN.

therefore, Johannes and his fellow-traveller turned into an inn, in order to rest and gather strength for the next day's excursion.

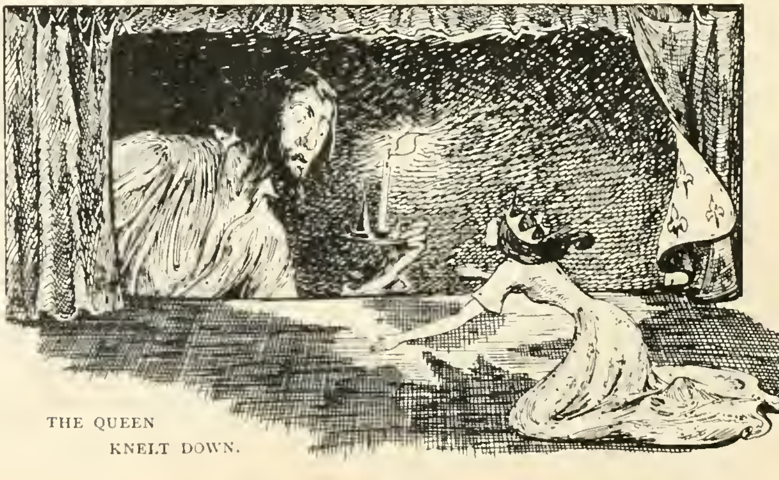
A number of persons were assembled in the tap-room of the inn, where a man was exhibiting a puppet-show. He had just set up his little theatre, and the people were sitting round to see the play. But, right in front, a stout butcher had sat himself down in the very best place, while his great bulldog by his side — who looked wondrously snappish—sat staring like the rest of the audience.

The play now began. It was a very pretty piece, with a king and queen, who sat on a splendid throne, with gold crowns on their heads and long trains to their robes; for their means allowed them to indulge in such luxuries. The prettiest little puppets, with glass eyes and large moustaches, stood at all the doors, and opened and shut them, to let in fresh air. It was a very agreeable play, and not at all mournful. But, just as the queen got up, and passed across the stage, no one knows what the huge bulldog took into his head; but, being no longer held by the butcher, he jumped right into the theatre, and seized the queen by the middle of her slender waist, so that it cracked again. It was quite shocking to hear.

The poor man who exhibited the show was both frightened and sorry for the loss of his queen, for she was the most elegant puppet in his stock, and the ugly bulldog had bitten her head off, But when the rest of the spectators had retired, the stranger who travelled with Johannes said that he would set her to rights, and, taking out his box, he smeared the puppet with the same ointment that had cured the old woman's broken leg. The moment this was done, the puppet was whole again, and could even move all her limbs of herself, and no longer required to be pulled by wires. The puppet was like a human being, except that it could not speak. The showman was vastly delighted, for now he had no longer any occasion to hold this puppet, who could dance of her own accord, which none of the others could do.

Late at night, when all the folks at the inn had gone to bed, somebody was heard to sigh so dreadfully deep, and so frequently, that the whole household got up, to see what could be the matter. The showman went to his little theatre, for it was from thence the sighing proceeded. All the wooden puppets were lying in a heap; the king and his body-guard it was who were sighing so piteously, and staring with their glass eyes, because they wished so to be smeared a little like the queen, in order that they might move of themselves. The queen knelt down and lifted up her pretty crown, saying, "Take this, but do smear my husband and my courtiers." The poor showman could not then help crying, for he was really sorry for his puppets. He immediately promised Johannes' fellow-traveller all the money he might earn on the following evening through his puppet-show, if he would only smear four or five of his prettiest puppets But the fellow-traveller said he did not require anything but the large sword that he wore at his side, on receiving which, he besmeared six puppets, that immediately danced so gracefully that all living girls that beheld them were irresistibly impelled to dance likewise. The coachman and the cook began dancing, then the waiters and the chambermaids, and all the strangers present, as well as the shovel and the tongs—only the latter fell down at the very first leap. They had, indeed, a merry night of it!

Next morning, Johannes started with his fellow-traveller,

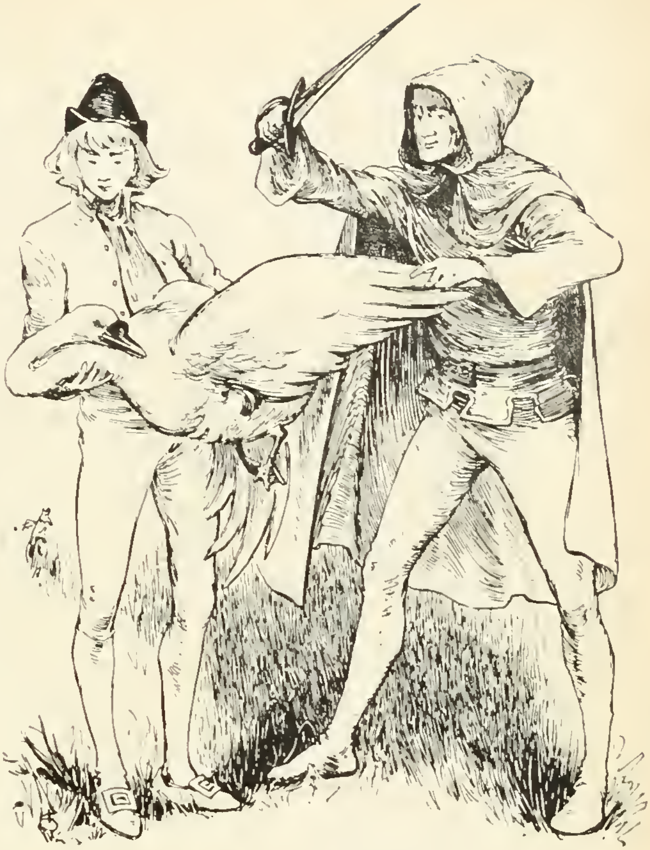


THE QUEEN KNELT DOWN.

before any of the others were astir, and crossed the large forest of fir-trees, in their way up the high mountains. They climbed to such a height that the church steeples below looked like little blue berries in the green grass, and they could see for miles and miles around, where they had never yet been. Johannes had never before seen so much at once of the beauties of this lovely world. And then the sun shone so warmly through the fresh blue air, and the huntsmen's horns echoed so beautifully between the mountains, that tears came into his eyes, and he could not forbear exclaiming, "All-merciful God! what a kind Father Thou art to us, to have given us all the fine things to be seen in the world!"

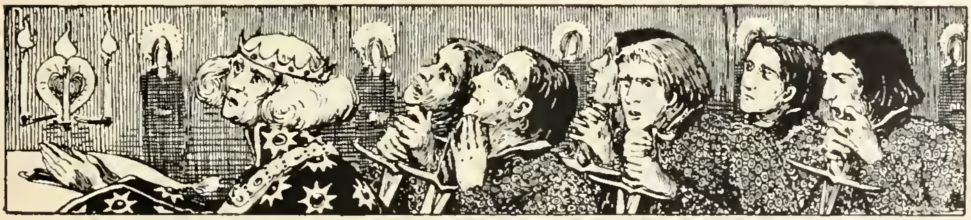
His fellow-traveller likewise stood with folded hands, and gazed upon the forest, and the towns that lay in the bright sunshine. At the same moment, they heard a lovely sound above their heads, and, on looking up, they perceived a large white swan hovering in the air, and singing as no bird had ever sung before. But its voice grew weaker and weaker, till its head drooped, and it slowly dropped down to their feet, where the poor bird lay quite dead.

"Two such beautiful wings," said the fellow-traveller, "so white and so large as this bird's, are worth some money; so I will take them with me. You see it was well that I obtained a sword." And he cut off the two wings of the dead swan at a single blow, and kept them.


CUT OFF THE TWO WINGS OF THE DEAD SWAN AT A SINGLE BLOW, AND KEPT THEM.

They now travelled many miles across the mountains, till they at length reached a large city, containing hundreds of towers, that shone like silver in the sunshine. In the midst of the town stood a handsome marble palace, roofed with pure red gold, in which dwelt the king.

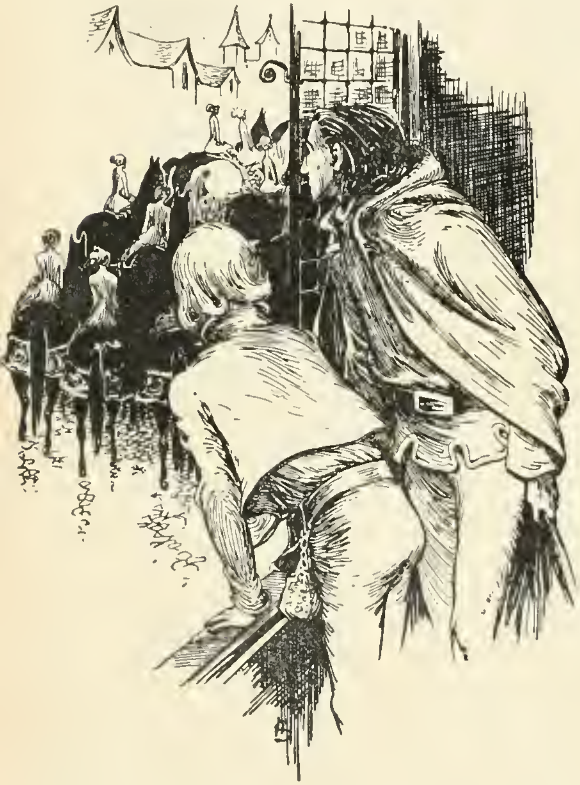
Johannes and his fellow-traveller did not care to enter the town immediately, but went into an inn, situated in the outskirts, in order to dress themselves; for they wished to look tidy when they walked through the streets. The landlord informed them how good a man the king was, and that he never injured anybody; but as to his daughter—Heaven defend us!—she was a bad princess indeed! Beauty she possessed in abundance: nobody was prettier or more elegant than herself. But what of that? She was a wicked witch, and was the cause of many accomplished princes having lost their lives. She had given leave to everybody to woo her. Any one might present himself, be he a prince or a beggar; it was all the same to her. Only he must guess three things that she had thought of and questioned him about. If he succeeded, he was to marry her, and become king over all the land at her father's death; but if he could not guess the three things, he was then to be hung, or to have his head struck off. Her father, the old king, was deeply concerned at all this; but he could not forbid her being so wicked, because he had once declared that he would never meddle with her


HE AND ALL HIS SOLDIERS USED TO KNEEL AND PRAY THAT THE PRINCESS MIGHT GROW GOOD.

lovers, and that she might do as she liked about them. Every time a prince came to try his luck at guessing, in order to obtain the princess's hand, he was sure to fail, and was, therefore, hung or beheaded. He had been warned betimes that it would be safer to desist from his suit. The old king was so afflicted at the mourning and wretchedness thus occasioned that, for one whole day in the year, he and all his soldiers used to kneel and pray that the princess might grow good; but she would not. The old women who tippled brandy used to colour it quite black before they drank it; this was their way of mourning, and they could not well do more.

"What a shocking princess!" said Johannes. "She deserves the rod, and it would do her good. If I were the old king, she should have been thrashed long ago."

They now heard the mob cheering outside the inn. The princess was passing, and she was really so beautiful that everybody forgot how wicked she was, and therefore hurrahed. Twelve beautiful maidens, dressed in white silk clothes and holding golden tulips in their hands, rode by her side on coal-black horses. The princess herself was mounted on a snow-white steed, with diamond and ruby trappings. Her riding-dress was of gold brocade; and the whip she held in her hand looked like a sunbeam. The gold crown on her head resembled the little stars twinkling in the heavens, while her mantle consisted of thousands of splendid butterflies' wings stitched together. Yet, in spite of this magnificence, she was herself far more beautiful than her clothes.



THEY NOW HEARD THE MOB CHEERING OUTSIDE THE INN. THE PRINCESS WAS PASSING BY.

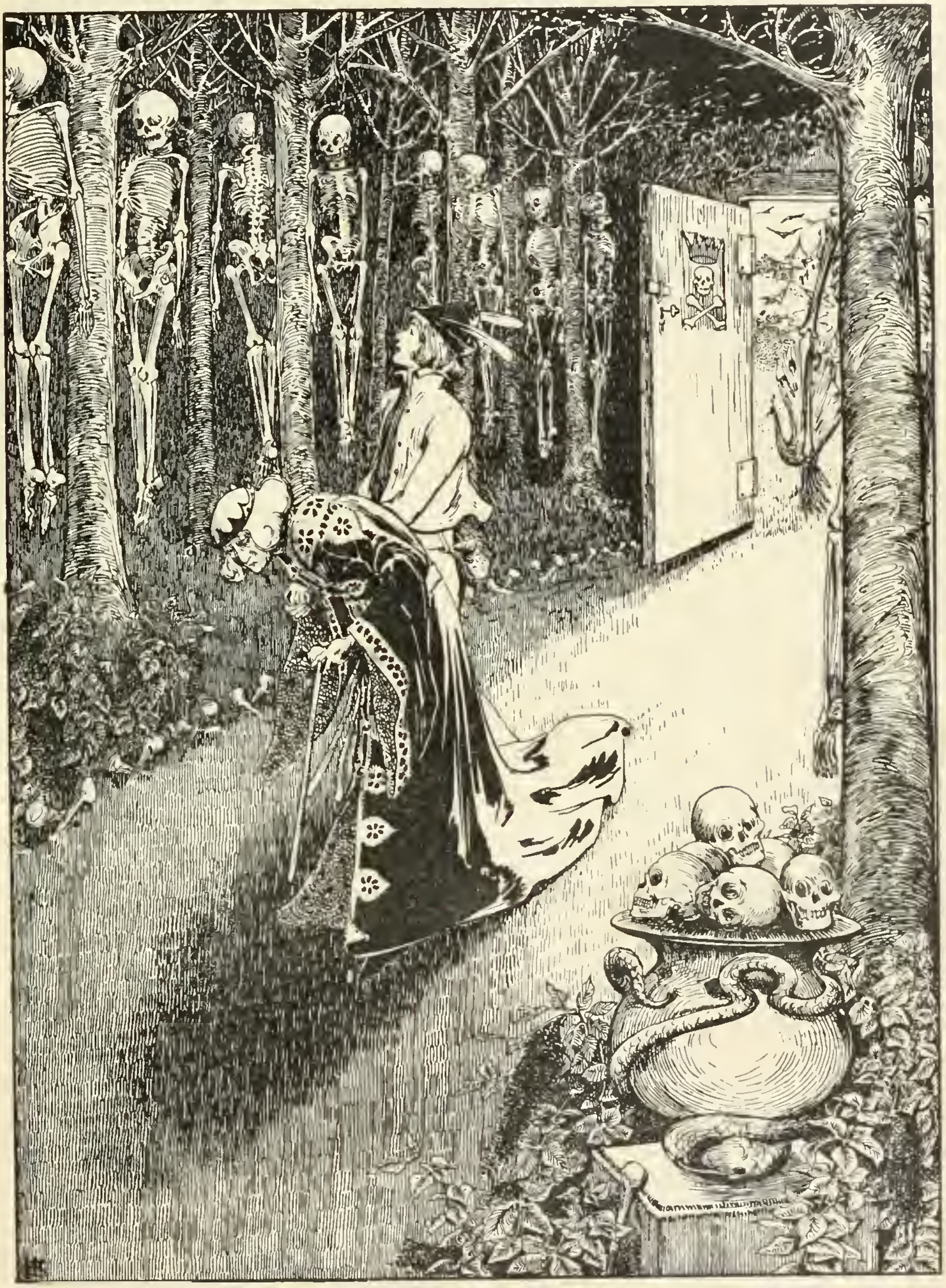
When Johannes caught sight of her, his face grew as red as a drop of blood, and he was struck completely dumb; for the princess exactly resembled the beautiful girl with the golden crown, whom he had dreamed of the night his father died. He thought her most beautiful, and could not help loving her passionately. It could not be possible, thought he, that she was a wicked witch, who ordered people to be hung or beheaded when they were unable to guess what she asked. "But since every one, down to the poorest beggar, is free to woo her," said he, "I will repair to the palace, for I cannot resist doing so." Everybody advised him not to attempt such a thing, as he must inevitably fail like the rest. His fellow-traveller, likewise, warned him to desist; but Johannes thought he should succeed. He brushed his shoes and his coat, washed his hands and face, combed his pretty, flaxen hair, and then went alone into the town, and proceeded to the palace.

"Come in," said the old king, when Johannes knocked at the door. Johannes opened it, and the old king came forward to meet him in his dressing-gown and embroidered slippers; he wore his crown on his head, and bore his sceptre in one hand and his ball in the other. "Wait a bit," said he, putting the ball under his arm, to leave one hand free to present to Johannes. But the moment he heard he came as a suitor, he began to weep so violently that both ball and sceptre fell on the floor, and he was fain to wipe his eyes with the skirts of his dressing-gown. Poor old king!

"Think not of it," said he, "you will fare as badly as all the others. Come, you shall see."

He then led him into the princess's pleasure-garden, and a frightful sight was there to behold! From every tree hung three or four kings' sons who had wooed the princess, but had been unable to guess her riddles. At every breeze that blew, all these skeletons rattled till the little birds were frightened, and never dared to come into the garden. All the flowers were propped with human bones; and human skulls might be seen grinning in flower-pots. It was an odd garden for a princess.

"Now, you see," said the old king, "your fate will be just the same as that of all the others whose remains you behold. Therefore give up the attempt. You really make me quite unhappy, for I take it so to heart."



FROM EVERY TREE HUNG THREE OR FOUR KINGS' SONS, WHO HAD WOOED THE PRINCESS, BUT HAD BEEN UNABLE TO GUESS HER RIDDLES.

Johannes kissed the good old king's hand, and assured him that all would be well; for he was quite enchanted with the lovely princess.

As the princess then rode into the palace-yard, accompanied by all her ladies, they went out to greet her. She was marvellously fair to look upon, as she presented her hand to Johannes. And he thought a great deal more of her than he did before; and felt certain she could not be a wicked witch, as everybody said she was. They then went into a room where little pages handed them sweetmeats and gingerbread-nuts. But the old king was so out of sorts, he could not eat at all. Besides, the gingerbread-nuts were too hard for him.

It was agreed that Johannes should return to the palace on the following morning, when the judges and the whole council would be assembled to see and hear how the guessing was carried on. If he succeeded, he was then to return twice more; but there never yet had been anybody who had been able to solve any question the first time, and in each case his life was forfeited.

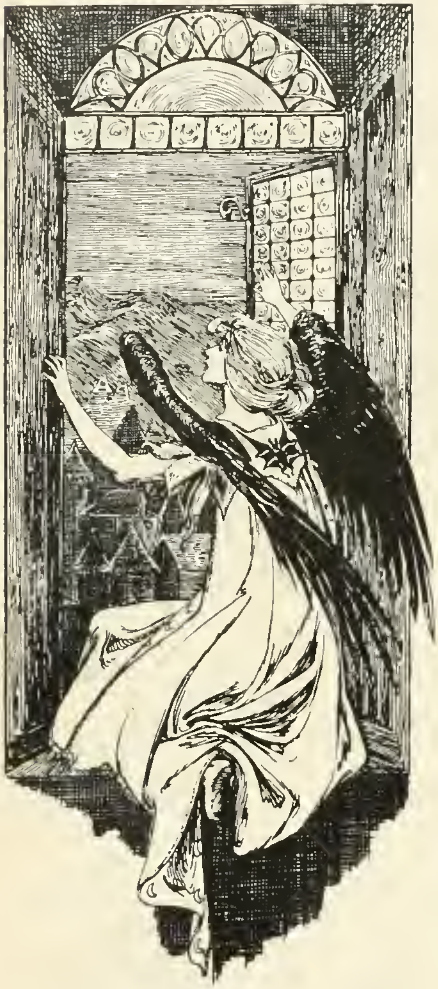
Johannes felt no anxiety as to how he should fare. On the contrary, he was pleased, and thought only of the beautiful princess; and was quite confident that God would help him through his trials. Though how this was to be accomplished he knew not, and preferred not troubling himself to think about the matter. He capered along on the high-road, as he returned to the inn where his fellow-traveller was waiting his return.

Johannes could not cease expatiating on the gracious reception he had met with from the princess, and on her extreme beauty. He quite longed for the morrow, when he was to go to the palace and try his luck at guessing.

But his fellow-traveller shook his head mournfully. "I wish you so well!" said he. "We might have remained together a good deal longer, and now I must lose you! Poor, dear Johannes! I could weep, only I will not spoil your joy on the last evening that we may ever spend together. We will be merry—right merry! To-morrow, when you are gone, I shall be able to weep undisturbed."

All the inhabitants of the town had immediately heard that there was a new suitor for the princess's hand, and there prevailed universal consternation. The theatre was closed; the pastry-cooks put crape round their sugar-husbands; and the king and the priests were on their knees in the church. This sadness was occasioned by the conviction that Johannes could not succeed better than all the other suitors had done.

Towards evening Johannes' fellow-traveller prepared a goodly bowl of punch, and said: "Now let us be merry, and drink the princess's health." But after drinking a couple of glasses, Johannes proved so sleepy, that he could not possibly keep his eyes open, and fell fast asleep. His fellow-traveller then lifted him gently out of his chair, and laid him in bed; and when it was quite dark, he took the two large wings he had cut off from the dead swan, and fastened them firmly to his own shoulders. He then put into his pocket the largest rod that he had obtained from the old woman who fell and broke her leg; and opening the window, he flew over the town, straight to the palace, where he placed himself in an upper corner of the building right under the princess's bed-chamber.

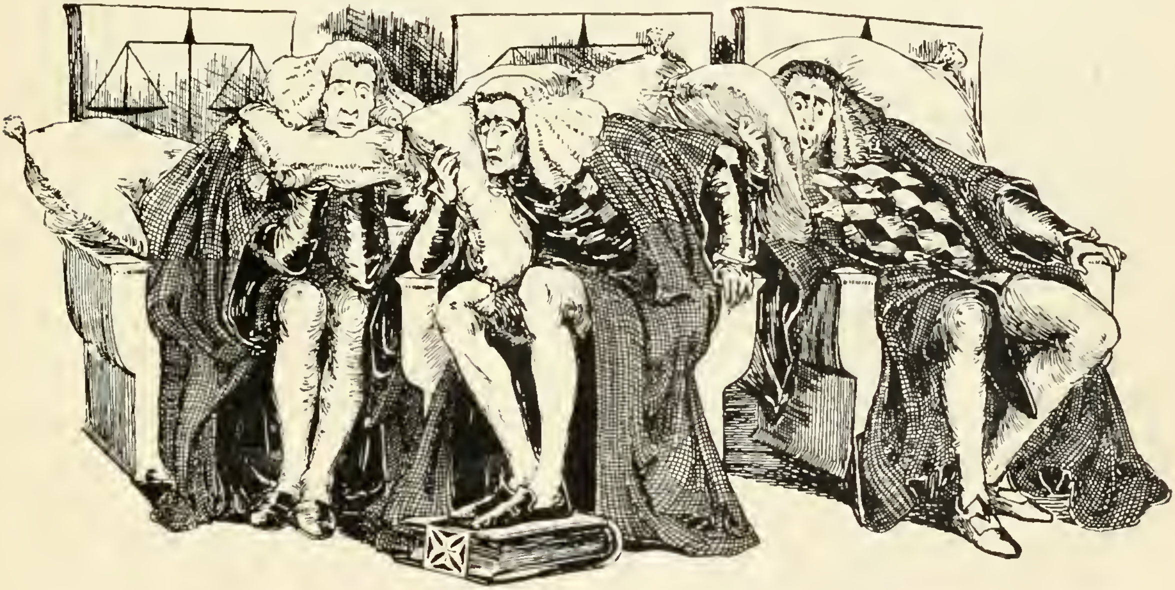


THE PRINCESS, WRAPPED IN A FLOWING WHITE ROBE, AND PROVIDED WITH A PAIR OF BLACK WINGS, FLEW OVER THE CITY.

The whole town was perfectly quiet. The clock now struck a quarter to twelve, when the window opened, and the princess, wrapped in a flowing white mantle, and provided with a pair of black wings, flew over the city towards a large mountain. But the fellow-traveller made himself invisible; and as he flew behind the princess, he thrashed her with his rod till she bled. What a strange flight through the air it was! The wind caught her mantle, which swelled out on all sides like the large sail of a ship, and the moon shone through it.

"How it does hail, to be sure!" said the princess, at every blow she received from the rod;

and such weather suited her. At last she reached the mountain, and knocked for admittance. Then came a noise like a clap of thunder, while the mountain opened, and the princess went in. The fellow-traveller followed her, for nobody could see him, as he was invisible. They went through a long, wide passage, where the walls shone brilliantly from the light of above a thousand glittering spiders that were running up and down and illuminating them like fire. They next entered a large hall built of silver and gold; red and blue flowers, as large as sunflowers, were beaming from the walls; but nobody could pluck them, for the stems were ugly, venomous serpents, and the flowers were the flames their jaws kept vomiting forth. The whole ceiling was covered with glow-worms and light-blue bats that were flapping their thin wings. It looked quite frightful. In the middle of the floor stood a throne that was supported by the skeletons of four horses, whose harness had been furnished by the red, fiery spiders. The throne itself was of milk-white glass, and the cushions were little black mice that kept biting each other's tails. Above it was a canopy of a deep-red cobweb, dotted with the prettiest little green flies that sparkled like precious stones. On the throne sat an old magician, with a crown on his ugly head and a sceptre in his hand. He kissed the princess on her forehead, and placed her beside him on his splended throne, and then the music struck up. Huge black grasshoppers played the jew's-harp, while the owl beat a tattoo on its own body, having no better drum. It was a ludicrous concert. Little dark-coloured goblins, with a will-o'-the-wisp in their caps, danced about the room. But nobody could see the fellow-traveller, who had placed himself right behind the throne, where he could see and hear everything. The courtiers, who now came in, were very delicate and genteel. But anybody who could see what is what, would quickly perceive what they were made of. They were nothing better than broomsticks with cabbages for their heads, whom the magician had conjured into life, and whom he had tricked out in embroidered clothes. However, they did just as well, as they were only wanted for show.

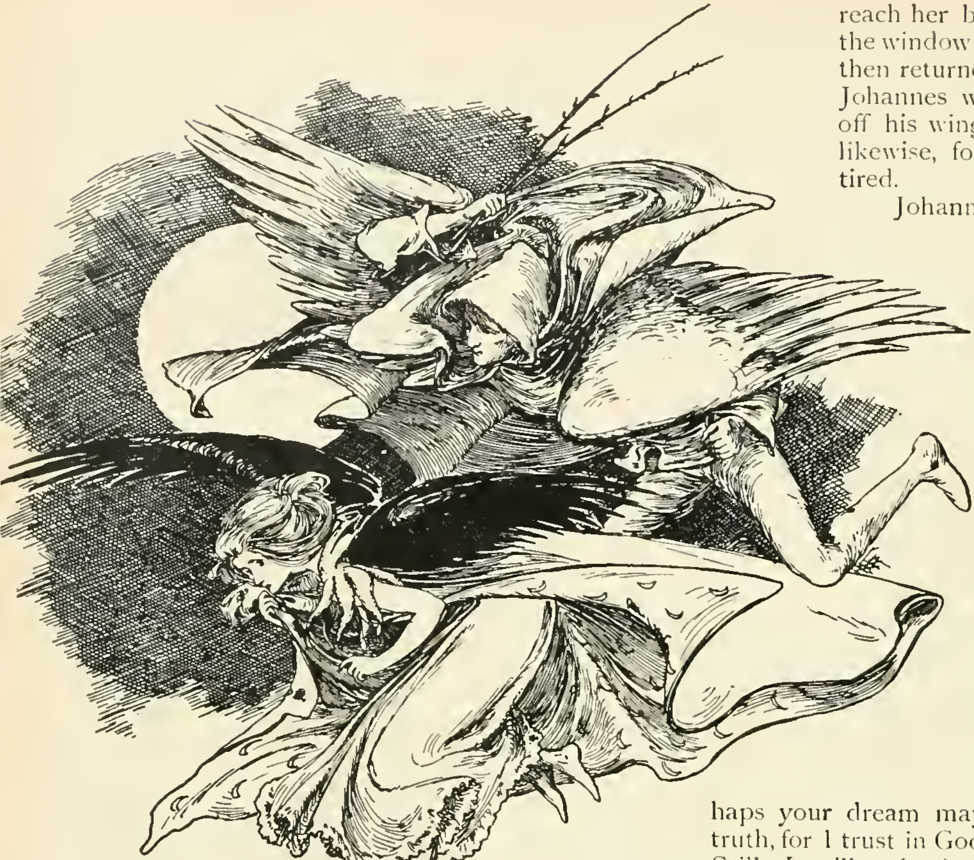


THE JUDGES SAT IN THEIR ARM-CHAIRS, WITH THEIR HEADS PROPPED UP BY EIDER-DOWN CUSHIONS, BECAUSE THEY HAD SO MUCH TO THINK ABOUT.

After a little dancing, the princess related to the magician that she had a new suitor, and consulted him as to what she should ask him next morning when he came to the palace.

"I will tell you what," said the magician; "you must choose something easy, and then he'll never hit upon it. Think of one of your shoes. He'll never guess that. Then you will have him beheaded, and mind you don't forget to bring me his eyes to-morrow night."

The princess bowed, and said she would not forget to bring them. The magician then opened the mountain, and she flew back; but the fellow-traveller followed her, and struck her so smartly with the rod, that she sighed most deeply over such a hail-storm, and hastened all she could to



THRASHED HER MORE VIOLENTLY THAN BEFORE, HAVING TAKEN TWO RODS WITH HIM.

reach her bed-chamber through the window The fellow-traveller then returned to the inn, where Johannes was still asleep, took off his wings, and went to bed likewise, for he might well be tired.

Johannes woke at an early hour next morning. His fellow-traveller got up, and told him that he had had a strange dream that night about the princess and her shoe, and therefore urged him to ask whether it was not her shoe that the princess was thinking about? For this he had learned from the magician in the mountain.

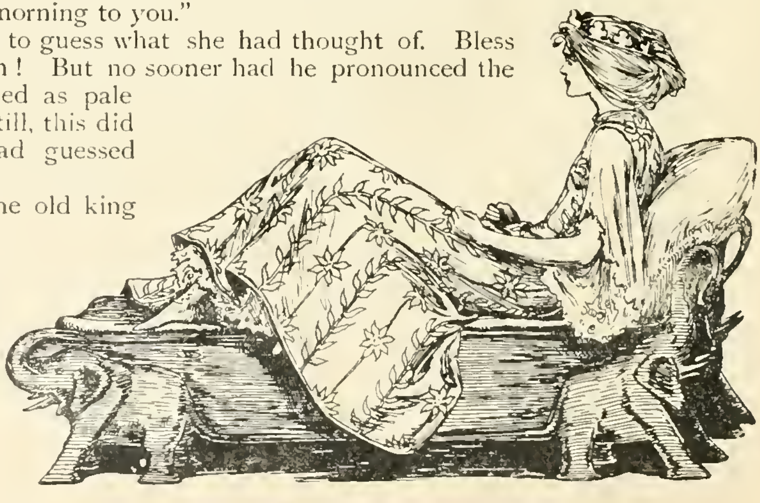
"I may as well ask that as anything else," said Johannes. "Perhaps your dream may turn out to be the truth, for I trust in God to help me through. Still, I will take leave of you, because should I guess wrong, I shall never see you again."

They then embraced one another, and Johannes went into the town, and walked to the palace. The whole hall was filled with people. The judges sat in their arm-chairs, with their heads propped up by eider-down cushions, because they had so much to think about. The old king stood wiping his eyes with a white pocket-handkerchief. The princess now entered. She looked more beautiful than even the day before, and saluted the assembly with charming grace. But she extended her hand to Johannes, saying: "Good-morning to you."

Johannes was now called upon to guess what she had thought of. Bless me! how kindly she did look at him! But no sooner had he pronounced the single word "shoe," than she turned as pale as chalk, and trembled all over. Still, this did not serve her much, since he had guessed correctly.

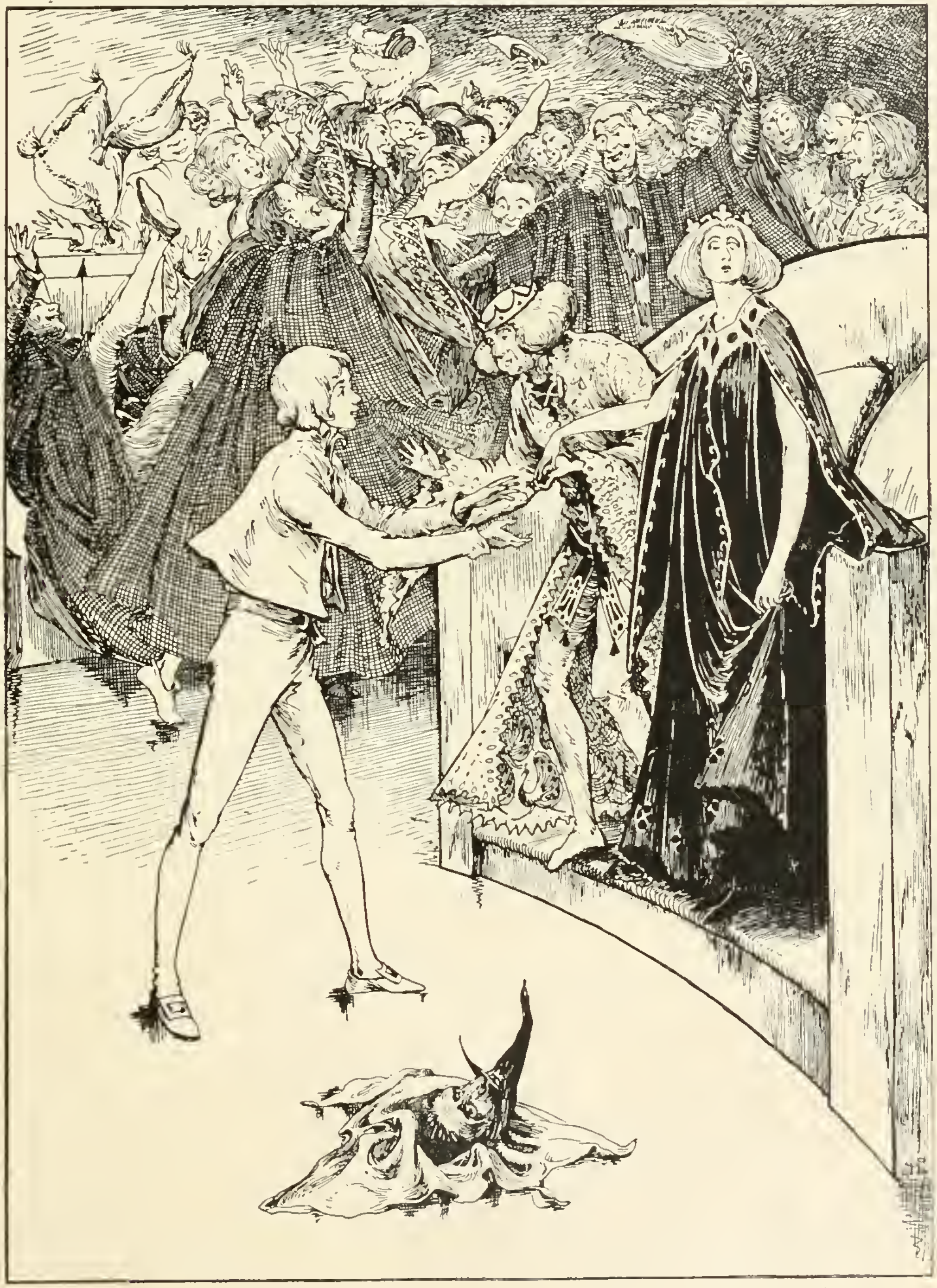
But, goodness! how pleased the old king was—he cut a caper that was quite pleasant to behold! And all present clapped their hands, to cheer both him and Johannes, who had been successful in this, his first ordeal.

The fellow-traveller was likewise much rejoiced on hearing how matters had turned out. But Johannes folded his hands and thanked his God,



BUT THE PRINCESS LAY ON THE SOFA, AND WOULD NOT SPEAK A WORD.

who he felt certain would help him through the two next times. On the following day, he was to make a second attempt at guessing.

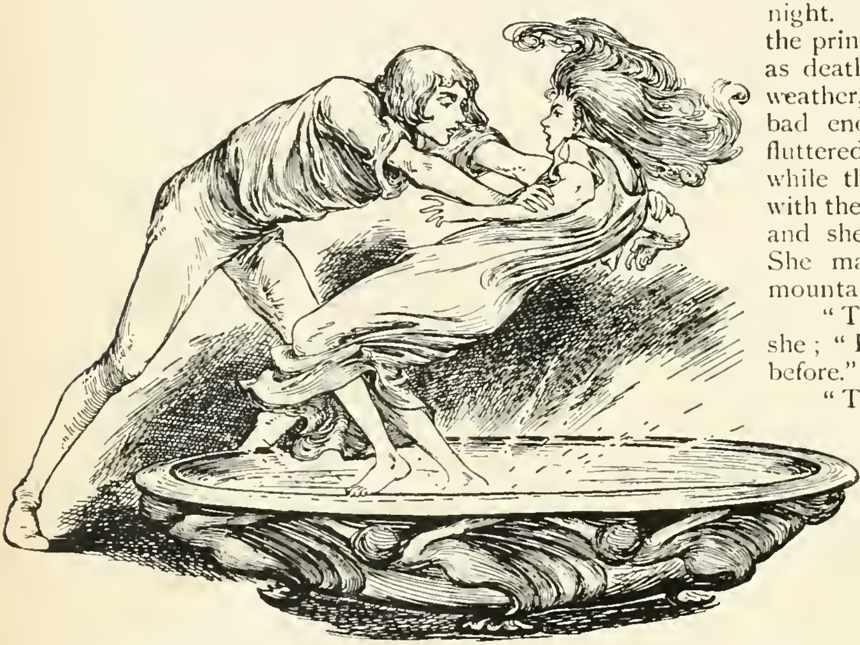


"SO MUCH THE BETTER," SAID THE OLD KING, "THAT'S JUST WHAT I WISH."

The evening passed much the same as the foregoing one. When Johannes had gone to sleep, his fellow-traveller flew after the princess to the mountain, and thrashed her more violently than before, having taken two rods with him. Nobody saw him, and he heard all that was said. The princess was to think of her glove, and this he repeated to Johannes, as if it had been a dream. So that he was able to guess correctly, which occasioned great joy amongst the inmates of the palace. The whole court cut capers as they had seen the king do the first time. But the princess lay on the sofa, and would not speak a word. All now depended on whether Johannes could guess right the third time. If he succeeded, he was to marry the beautiful princess, and reign over the land at the old king's death. But if he guessed wrong, he was to forfeit his life, and the magician would have his beautiful blue eyes.

On the preceding evening, Johannes went to bed early, said his prayers, and then fell into a quiet sleep. But his fellow-traveller tied his wings to his back, and put his sword at his side, and taking the three rods with him, flew towards the palace.

It was as dark as pitch, and there was such a storm that the tiles were flying off from the roofs of the houses, and the trees in the garden, where hung the skeletons, bent like so many reeds beneath the wind. It lightened every moment, and the thunder rolled along as though it was a single clap that lasted through the whole night. The window now opened, and the princess flew out. She was as pale as death, but she laughed at the bad weather, and thought it was scarcely bad enough. And her white mantle fluttered in the wind like a large sail, while the fellow-traveller thrashed her with the three rods till her blood flowed, and she could scarcely fly any farther. She managed, however, to reach the mountain.



THE PRINCESS SHRIEKED ALOUD WHEN HE DIPPED HER INTO THE WATER.

"This is a violent hail-storm," said she; "I was never out in such weather before."

"There may be too much of a good thing," observed the magician.

She now told him that Johannes had guessed aright the second time, and should he succeed again on the following morning, he would then have won, and she would never again be able to come to the mountain, or to practise magic arts as she had hitherto done; therefore was she quite out of spirits.

"He shall not be able to guess it," said the magician, "for I will find out something that he will never hit upon, unless he is a greater conjurer than myself. But now let's be merry!" And then he took both the princess's hands, and they danced about with all the little goblins, wearing will-o'-the-wisp lights, that were in the room. The red spiders jumped just as merrily up and down the walls; it looked as if the fiery flowers were emitting sparks. The owl beat the drum, the crickets whistled, and the black grasshoppers played on the jew's-harp. It was a frolicsome ball.

When they had danced enough the princess was obliged to go home, for fear of being missed in the palace. The magician said he would accompany her, that they might be together a little longer.

They then flew away through the bad weather, while the fellow-traveller broke his three rods across their shoulders. The magician had never been out in such a hail-storm before. Just on reaching the palace, and on bidding the princess farewell, he whispered, "Think of my head." But the fellow-traveller heard him, and just as the princess slipped in at her bedroom window, and the magician was about to turn round, he seized him by the long black beard, and cut off his ugly head at a single stroke from his sword, so that the magician had not even time to see him. He then threw the body into the sea, to serve as food for the fishes; but he merely dipped the head in the waters, and then tied it up in his silk handkerchief, and took it to the inn, and went to bed.

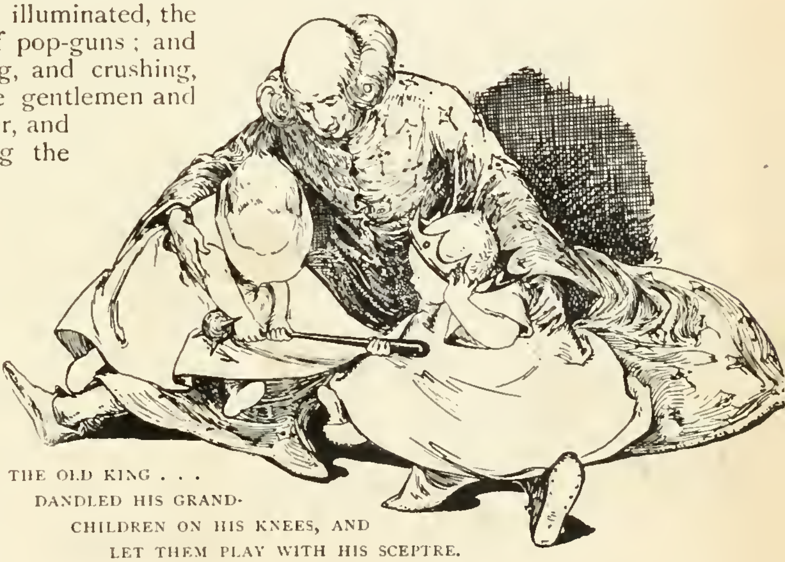
Next morning he gave the bundle to Johannes, bidding him not open it till the princess should ask him what she was thinking of.

There were so many spectators in the large hall of the palace, that they stood as thick as radishes tied in a bunch. The council sat on their arm-chairs with the soft cushions, and the old king was dressed in new clothes; his golden crown and sceptre had been furbished up; and the whole scene looked very solemn. But the princess was pale as ashes, and wore a coal-black dress, as though she were attending a funeral. "What have I thought of?" asked she of Johannes. And he immediately opened the silk handkerchief, when he was himself quite startled on beholding the ugly magician's head. Everybody shuddered, for it was frightful to look at; but the princess sat like a statue, and could not speak a word. At length she rose and gave her hand to Johannes, for he had guessed aright. She looked neither to the right nor the left, but sighed out: "Now you are my master! Our wedding will be celebrated this evening."

"So much the better," said the old king, "that's just what I wish." All present cried "Hurrah!" The soldiers on parade struck up their music in the streets, the bells were set a-ringing, the pastry-cooks took the black crape off their sugar-husbands, and rejoicings were held everywhere. Three oxen, stuffed with ducks and chickens, and roasted whole, were placed in the middle of the market-place, and every one was free to cut a slice; the fountains spouted the most delicious wine; and if one bought a penny cracknel at the baker's, one received six large biscuits as a present—and the biscuits had raisins in them!

Towards night the whole town was illuminated, the soldiers fired cannons, and the boys let off pop-guns; and there was a deal of eating, and drinking, and crushing, and capering at the palace. All the fine gentlemen and the beautiful young ladies danced together, and one might hear them from afar singing the following song:—

"Here are many maidens fair,
  Who twirl like any spinning-wheel,
And tread the floor as light as air;
  Still round and round, sweet maiden, reel,
And dance away the mazes through,
Until the sole has left your shoe"


THE OLD KING . . . DANDLED HIS GRANDCHILDREN ON HIS KNEES, AND LET THEM PLAY WITH HIS SCEPTRE.

But the princess was still a witch, and could not endure Johannes. This struck his fellow-traveller, and therefore he gave Johannes three feathers out of the swan's wings, and a small phial containing only a few drops, and told him to place a large vat full of water in front of the princess's bed, and when the princess was about to get into bed, he must give her a slight push, so that she should fall into the water, into which he must dip her three times, having taken care first to shake in the feathers and the contents of the phial. The magic spell would then be broken, and she would love him tenderly.

Johannes did all that his fellow-traveller suggested. The princess shrieked aloud when he dipped her into the water, and struggled out of his hands under the form of a coal-black swan with fiery eyes. The second time she rose to the surface the swan had become white, all but a black ruff round its neck. Johannes prayed to God, and made the bird dive down a third time, when it was suddenly transformed to the most beautiful princess. She was far lovelier than before, and thanked him, with tears in her eyes, for having broken the spell that bound her.

On the following morning, the old king came with all his court, and the congratulations lasted till late in the day. Last of all came Johannes' fellow-traveller, with his stick in his hand, and his knapsack at his back. Johannes embraced him affectionately, and said that he must not go away, but stay with him, for he was the cause of all his happiness. But his fellow-traveller shook his head, and said in a mild and friendly voice: "No; my time is now up. I have but paid a debt. Do you remember the dead man whom his wicked creditors would fain have ill-used? You gave all you possessed that he might rest in peace in his grave. I am that dead man!"

And at the same moment he vanished.

The wedding rejoicings now lasted a full month. Johannes and the princess loved each other dearly, and the old king lived to see many a happy day, and dandled his little grandchildren on his knee, and let them play with his sceptre. And Johannes became king over the whole land.

The Little Match-Girl

IT was dreadfully cold, it snowed, and was getting quite dark, for it was evening—yes, the last evening of the year.

Amid the cold and the darkness, a little girl, with bare head and naked feet, was roaming through the streets. It is true she had on a pair of slippers when she left home, but that was not of much use, for they were very large slippers; so large, indeed, that they had hitherto been used by her mother; besides, the little creature lost them as she hurried across the street, to avoid two carriages, that were driving at a fearful rate. One of the slippers was not to be found, and the other was pounced upon by a boy, who ran away with it, saying that it would serve for a cradle when he should have children of his own.

So the little girl went along, with her little bare feet, that were red and blue with cold. She carried a number of matches in an old apron, and she held a bundle of them in her hand. Nobody had bought anything of her the whole livelong day, and nobody had even given her a penny.

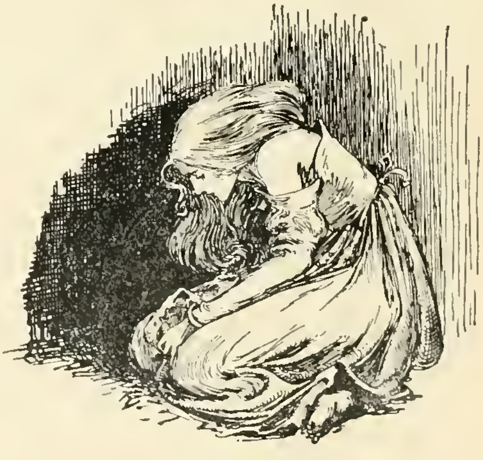
She crept along, shivering with cold and hunger, a perfect picture of misery—poor little thing!

The snow-flakes covered her long flaxen hair, which hung in pretty curls round her throat; but she heeded them not.

Lights were streaming from all the windows, and there was a savoury smell of roast goose; for it was St. Sylvester's evening. And this she did heed.

She now sat down, cowering in a corner formed by two houses, one of which projected beyond the other. She had drawn her little feet under her, but she felt colder than ever; yet she dared not return home, for she had not sold a match, and could not bring back a penny.

Her father would certainly beat her; and it was cold enough at home, besides—for they had only the roof above them, and the wind came howling through it, though the largest holes had been stopped with straw and rags. Her little hands were nearly frozen with cold.



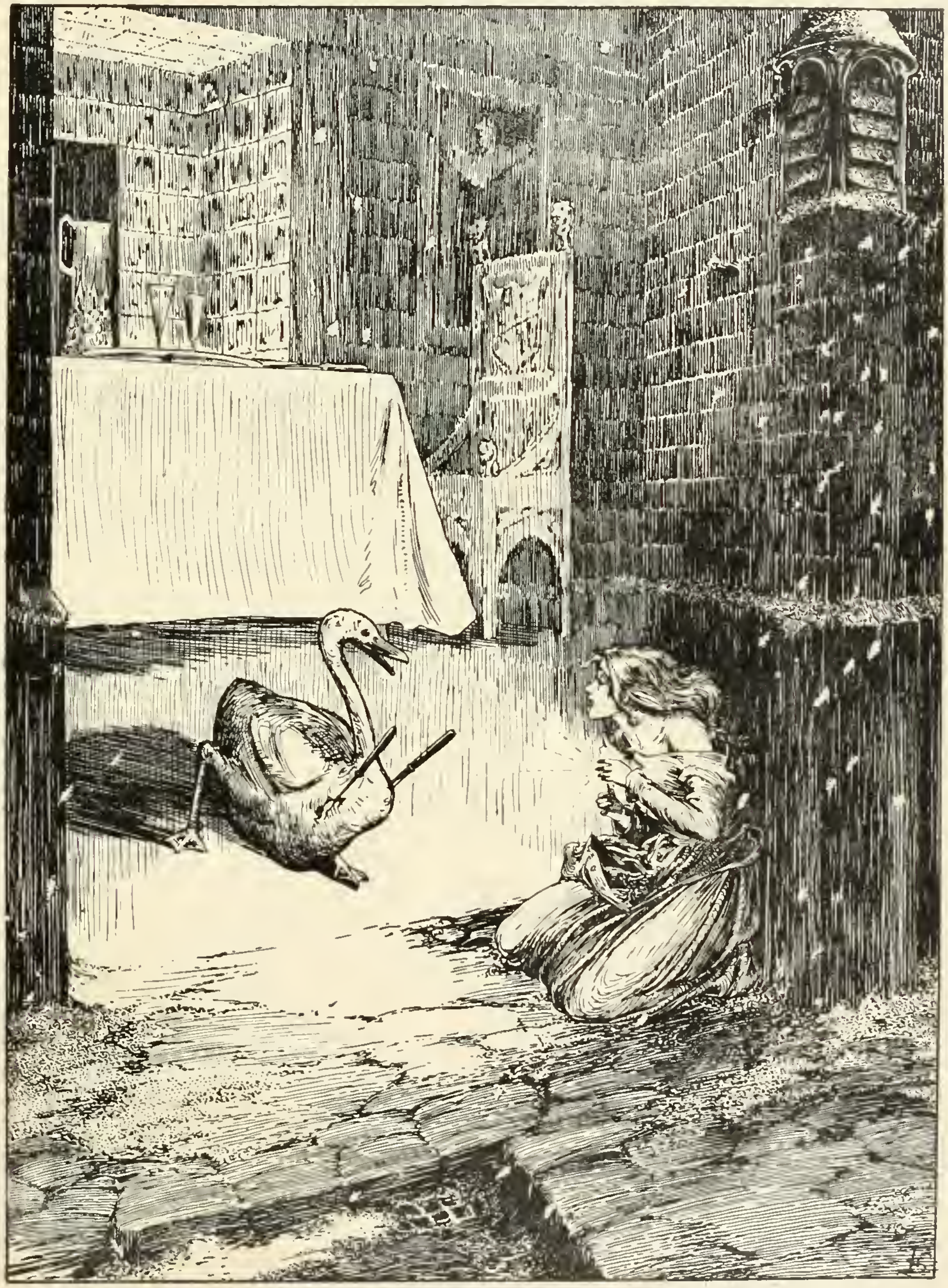
SHE NOW SAT DOWN, COWERING IN A CORNER. SHE HAD DRAWN HER LITTLE FEET UNDER HER, BUT FELT COLDER THAN EVER.

Alas! a single match might do her some good, if she might only draw one out of the bundle, and rub it against the wall, and warm her fingers.

So at last she drew one out. Whisht! how it shed sparks, and how it burned! It gave out a warm, bright flame, like a little candle, as she held her hands over it,—truly, it was a wonderful little light! It really seemed to the little girl as if she were sitting before a large iron stove, with polished brass feet, and brass shovel and tongs. The fire burned so blessedly, and warmed so nicely, that the little creature stretched out her feet to warm them likewise, when lo! the flame expired, the stove vanished, and left nothing but the little half-burned match in her hand.

She rubbed another match against the wall. It gave a light, and where it shone upon the wall, the latter became as transparent as a veil, and she could see into the room.

A snow-white tablecloth was spread upon the table, on which stood a splendid china dinner service, while a roast goose, stuffed with apples and prunes, sent forth the most savoury odour. And what was more delightful still, the goose jumped down from the dish, and waddled along the ground with a knife and fork in its breast, up to the poor girl.



AND WHAT WAS MORE DELIGHTFUL STILL, THE GOOSE JUMPED DOWN FROM THE DISH, AND WADDLED ALONG THE GROUND, WITH A KNIFE AND FORK IN ITS BREAST, UP TO THE POOR GIRL.

The match then went out, and nothing remained but the thick, damp wall. She lit another match.

She now sat under the most magnificent Christmas tree, that was larger, and more superbly decked, than even the one she had seen through the glass door at the rich merchant's. A thousand tapers burned on its green branches, and gay pictures, such as one sees on targets, seemed to be looking down upon her. The match then went out.

The Christmas lights kept rising higher and higher. They now looked like stars in the sky. One of them fell down, and left a long streak of fire.

"Somebody is now dying," thought the little girl—for her old grandmother, the only person who had ever loved her, and who was now dead, had told her, that when a star falls, it is a sign that a soul is going up to heaven.

She again rubbed a match upon the wall, and it was again light all round; and in the brightness stood her old grandmother, clear and shining like a spirit, yet looking so mild and loving.

"Grandmother," cried the little one, "oh! take me with you! I know you will go away when the match goes out—you will vanish like the warm stove, and the delicious roast goose, and the fine, large Christmas-tree?"

And she made haste to rub the whole bundle of matches, for she wished to hold her grandmother fast.

And the matches gave a light that was brighter than noonday. Her grandmother had never appeared so beautiful nor so large. She took the little girl in her arms, and both flew upwards, all radiant and joyful, far—far above mortal ken—where there was neither cold, nor hunger, nor care to be found; for it was to the land of the blessed that they had flown.

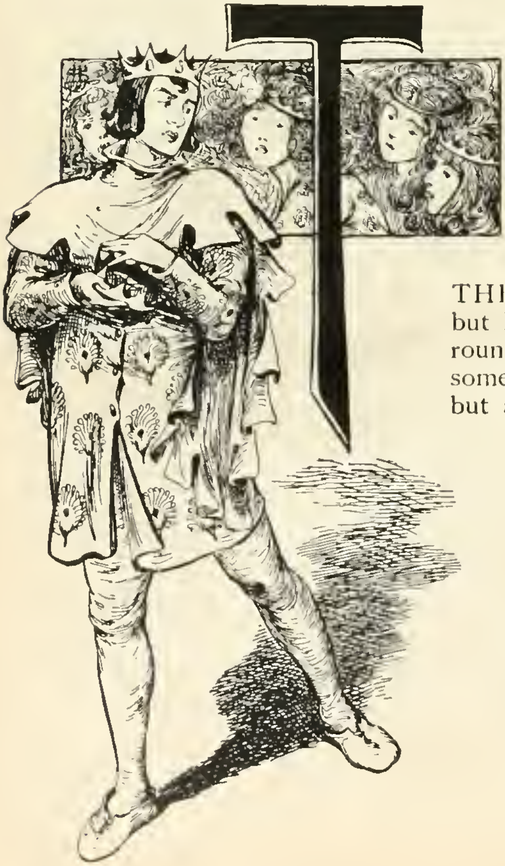
But, in the cold dawn, the poor girl might be seen leaning against the wall, with red cheeks and smiling mouth: she had been frozen on the last night of the old year.

The new year's sun shone upon the little corpse.

The child sat in the stiffness of death, still holding the matches, one bundle of which was burned.

People said: "She tried to warm herself."

Nobody dreamed of the fine things she had seen, nor in what splendour she had entered upon the joys of the new year, together with her grandmother.



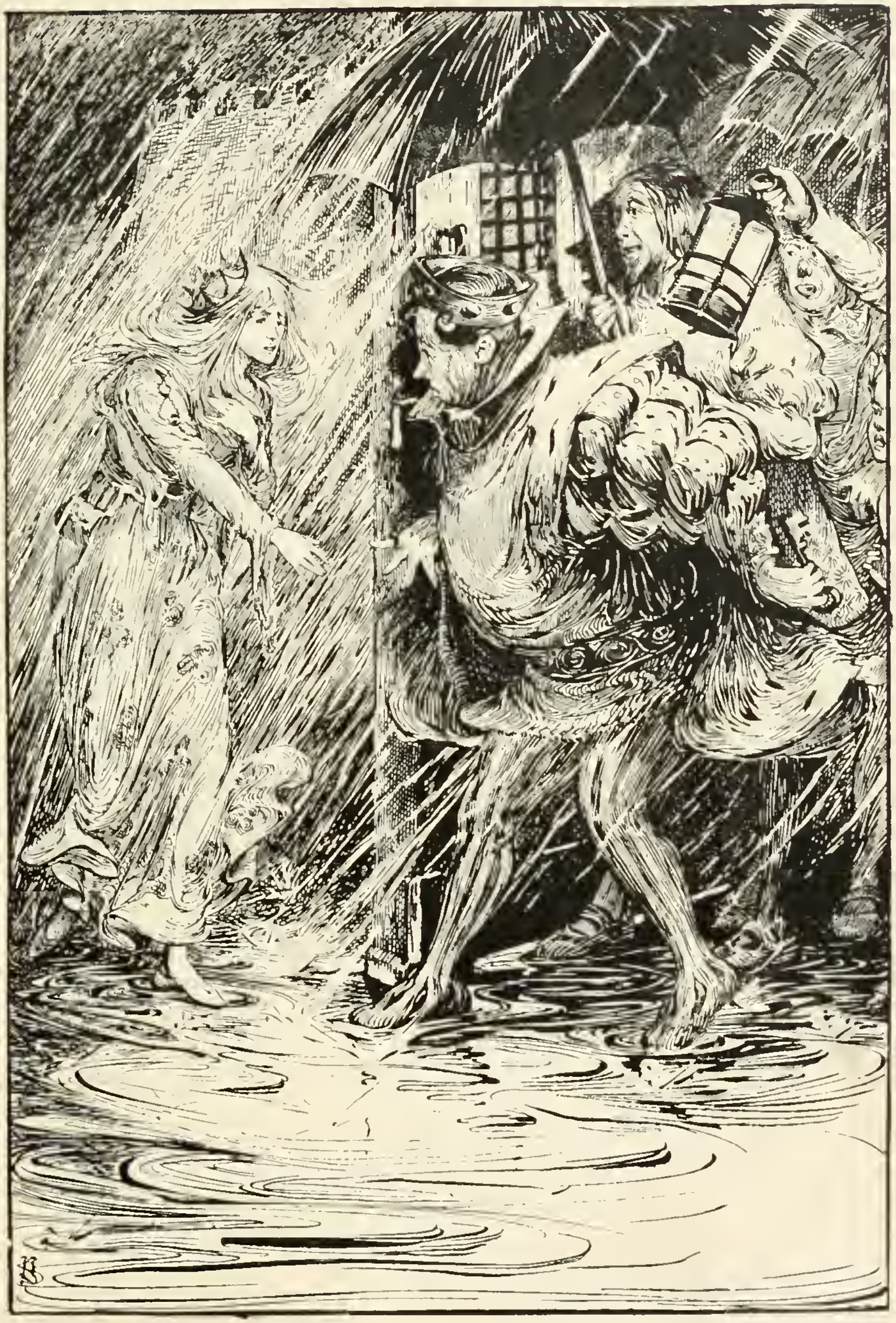
The Real Princess

THERE was once a prince who wished to marry a princess; but he wanted her to be a real princess. He travelled all round the world to find such one, but there was always something wrong. Not that there was any lack of princesses, but as to whether or no they were real ones, he could not always make out. There was sure to be something in the way that was not quite satisfactory. At length he returned home, quite out of spirits, for he wished so to find a real princess.

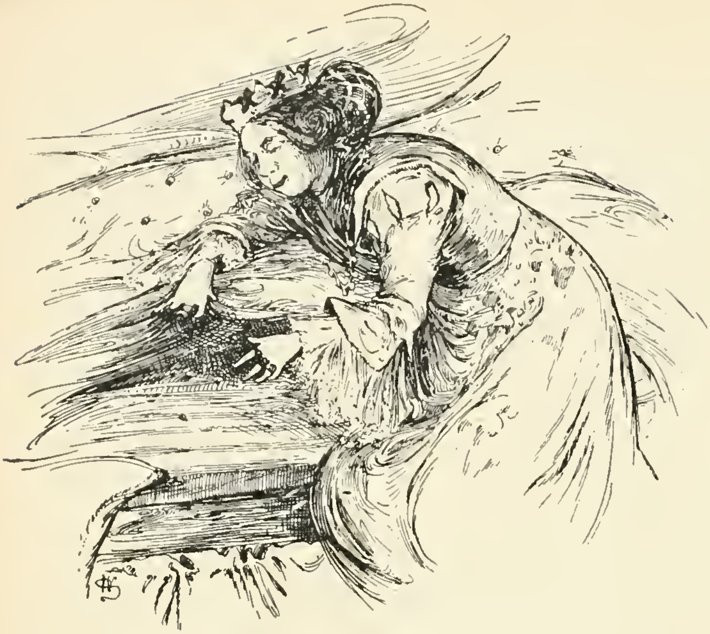
One evening there was a dreadful storm. It thundered and lightened, and poured of rain, till it was quite dreadful. There came a knock at the town-gate, and the old king went and opened it.

A princess stood outside the gate—but, oh dear! what a state she was in from the rain and the bad weather! The water was dripping down from her hair and her clothes, and running in at the tips of her shoes and coming out at the heels. Yet she said she was a real princess.

"Well, that we'll presently see," thought the old



THERE CAME A KNOCK AT THE TOWN GATE, AND THE OLD KING WENT AND OPENED IT.



BUT SHE SAID NOTHING, AND WENT INTO A SPARE ROOM AND LAID A PEA ON THE SACKING OF THE BEADSTEAD.

queen. But she said nothing, and went into a spare room, and took off all the bedding, and laid a pea on the sacking of the bedstead. She then took twenty mattresses and laid them upon the pea, and then piled twenty eider-down beds on the top of the mattresses.

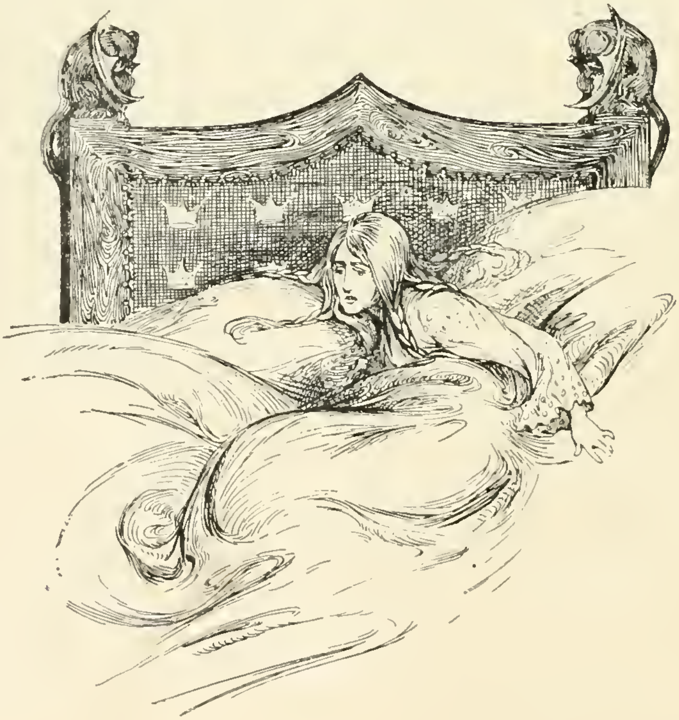
The princess lay upon them the whole night. On the following morning she was asked how she had slept.

"Oh, most shockingly!" said the princess. "I scarcely closed my eyes all night! I do not know what was in the bed. I laid upon some hard substance, which has made me black and blue all over. It is quite dreadful!"

It was now evident that she was a real princess, since she perceived the pea through twenty mattresses and twenty eider-down beds. None but a real princess could have such delicate feeling.

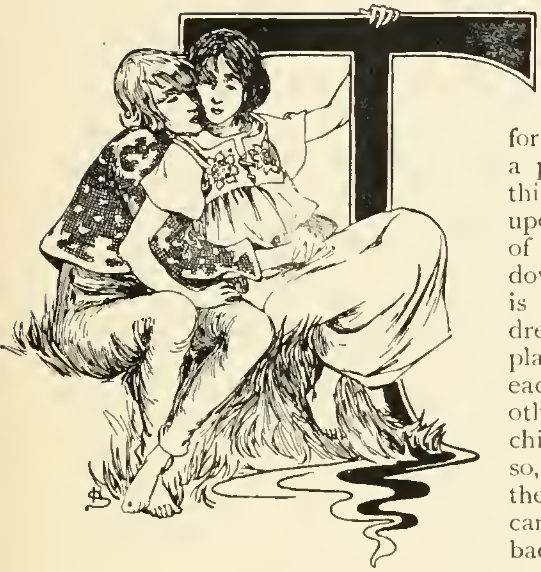
So the prince married her, for he knew that he had now found a real princess; and the pea was preserved in the cabinet of curiosities, where it is still to be seen, unless somebody has stolen it.

And this, mind you, is a real story.



"I SCARCELY CLOSED MY EYES ALL NIGHT! I DO NOT KNOW WHAT WAS IN THE BED."

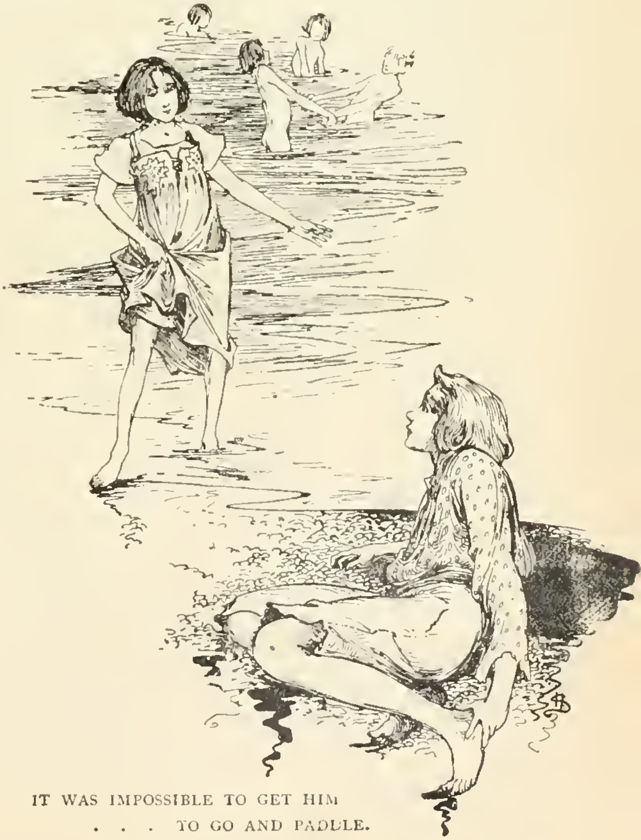
Under the Willow



THE country is very bare in the neighbourhood of Kjöge; the town, indeed, lies on the sea-shore, and that is always beautiful, but yet it might be more beautiful than it is. Round about the ground is flat, and the forest is a long way off; but when one is quite at home in a place one always finds something beautiful there, something that one would long for even in the loveliest spot upon earth. And we may also say that in an outlying part of Kjöge, where a couple of poor little gardens extend down to the little rivulet which runs down to the beach, it is quite delightful in summer; and, indeed, two little children, Canute and Joan, who lived there, found it so as they played about, and crept under the gooseberry-bushes after each other. In one of the gardens stood an elder, in the other an old willow; and under that tree in particular the children delighted to play; and they were allowed to do so, although the tree stood quite close to the stream, where they easily could have fallen into the water, but God took care of the little ones — otherwise they would have fared badly. They were also very careful; indeed, the boy was so much afraid of the water that it was not possible in the summer to get him out on the beach, where the other children delighted to go and paddle; he was scolded sharply for it, and he had to bear that; but little Joan, the neighbour's child, once dreamt that she was sailing in a boat in the Bay of Kjöge, and Canute went straight out to her; the water at first reached to his neck, and then it rose right over his head; and from the moment that Canute heard that dream he could no longer bear that they should say he was afraid of the water, but he merely referred to Joan's dream, and did not go into the water.

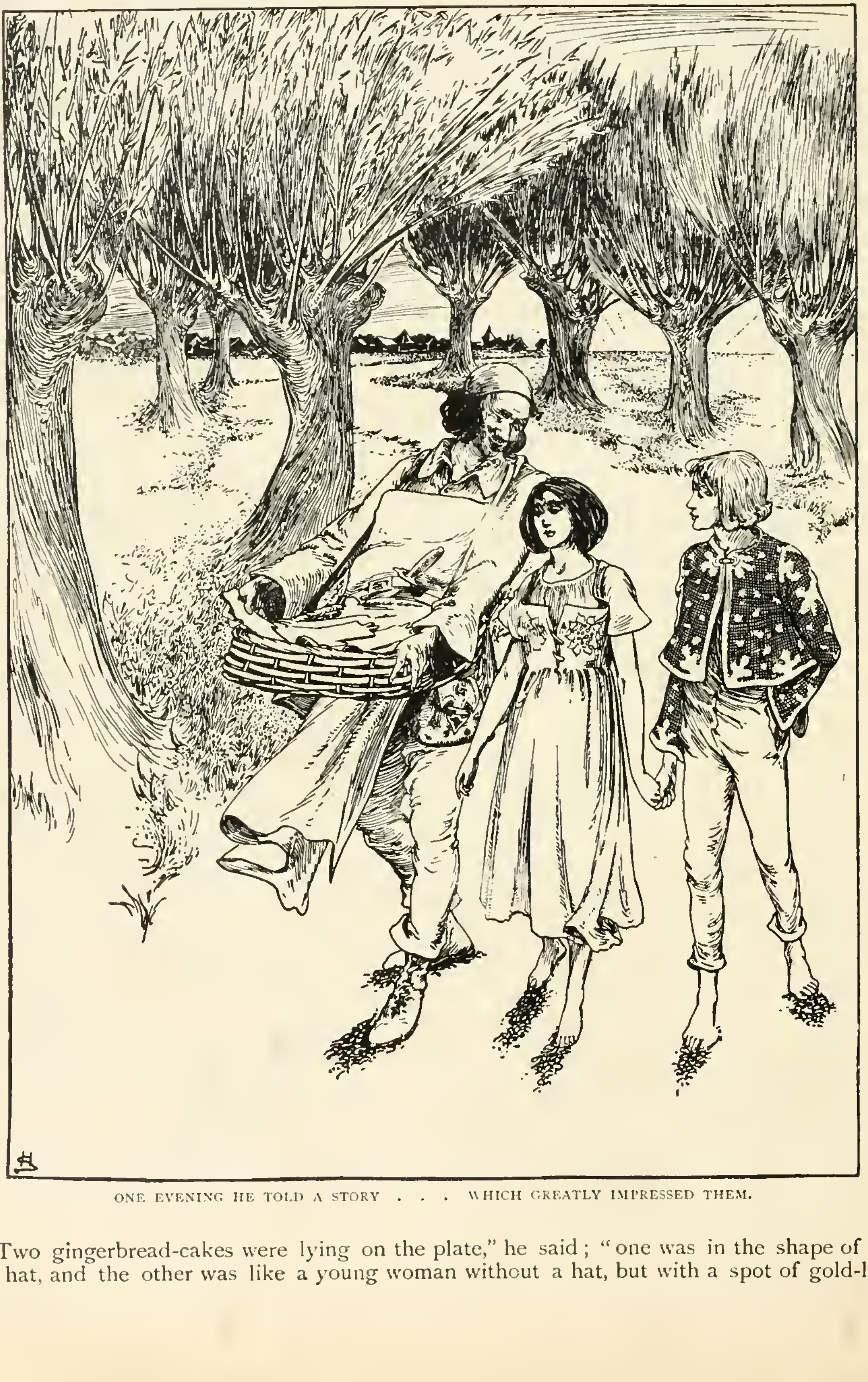
The poor parents often met, and Canute and Joan played in the gardens and out in the road, along which a whole row of willows grew beside the ditch; they were not beautiful, for they were pollarded, they did not stand there for show but to be of use; the old willow in the garden was more beautiful, and they sat under it many a time and oft, as they say.

There is a large market-place in Kjöge, and at fair-time there stood whole streets of tents with silk ribbons, boots, and everything possible; there was a great crowd, and it was generally in rainy weather, so that you noticed the vapour from the peasants' cloaks, but there was also a most delightful smell of gingerbread; there was a whole booth full of it; and the best part of it was that the man who sold it always lodged at fair-time with little Canute's parents, and so a little gingerbread-cake naturally found its way there also, whereof Joan had a piece; moreover, what almost seemed even more delightful, the gingerbread-seller could tell stories about almost everything,



IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO GET HIM . . . TO GO AND PADDLE.

even about his own gingerbread-cakes. One evening he told a story about these which made so deep an impression on the two children that they never afterwards forgot it ; and so it is best that we also should hear it, especially as it is short.



ONE EVENING HE TOLD A STORY . . . WHICH GREATLY IMPRESSED THEM.

"Two gingerbread-cakes were lying on the plate," he said ; "one was in the shape of a man with a hat, and the other was like a young woman without a hat, but with a spot of gold-leaf on her head; they had their faces on the side which was turned upwards, and you ought to look on them that way and not on the wrong side, just as you should look at some people. The man had a bitter almond at his left side, and that was his heart; the young woman, on the other hand, was nothing but gingerbread. They lay as samples on the plate, they lay a long time and so they fell in love with each other; but neither said anything of it to the other, and that one must do if it is to come to anything.

"'He is a man, he must speak the first word,' she thought; but still she would be pleased to know that her love was reciprocated.

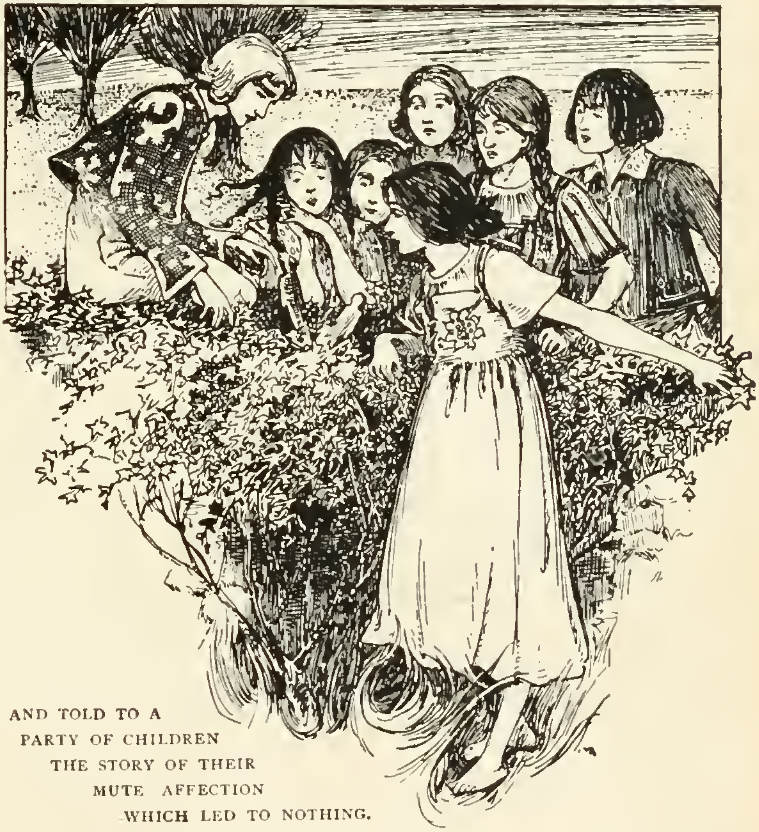
"Now, he was more greedy in his thoughts, as men always are; he dreamt that he was a live street-boy and possessed twopence, and so he bought the young woman and ate her.

"And they lay days and weeks on the plate and grew dry, and her thoughts became more delicate and womanly: 'It is enough for me that I have lain on the same plate with him!' she thought, and so she cracked at the waist.

"'If she had known my love, she would have held together longer!' he thought.

"And that is the story, and here they are both of them!" said the cake-seller. "They are notable for their career and their mute affection, which never led to anything. Look! there they are!" and so he gave Joan the man, which was entire, and Canute had the broken young woman; but they were so sad about the story that they had not the heart to eat the lovers.

The next day they went with them into Kjöge churchyard, where the church wall is covered with the most beautiful green ivy, which hangs over the wall like a rich curtain, winter and summer; and they placed the gingerbread-cakes up in the green in the sunshine, and they told to a party of other children the story of their mute affection which led to nothing: they called it affection, for the story was delightful — they all found it so. Then they looked at the gingerbread lovers; and yes! there was a great boy, who, it seems, out of pure malice, had eaten the broken young woman. The children burst into tears, and afterwards—and no doubt it was that the unfortunate man should not be left alone in the world—they ate him up also, but they never forget the story.



AND TOLD TO A PARTY OF CHILDREN THE STORY OF THEIR MUTE AFFECTION WHICH LED TO NOTHING.

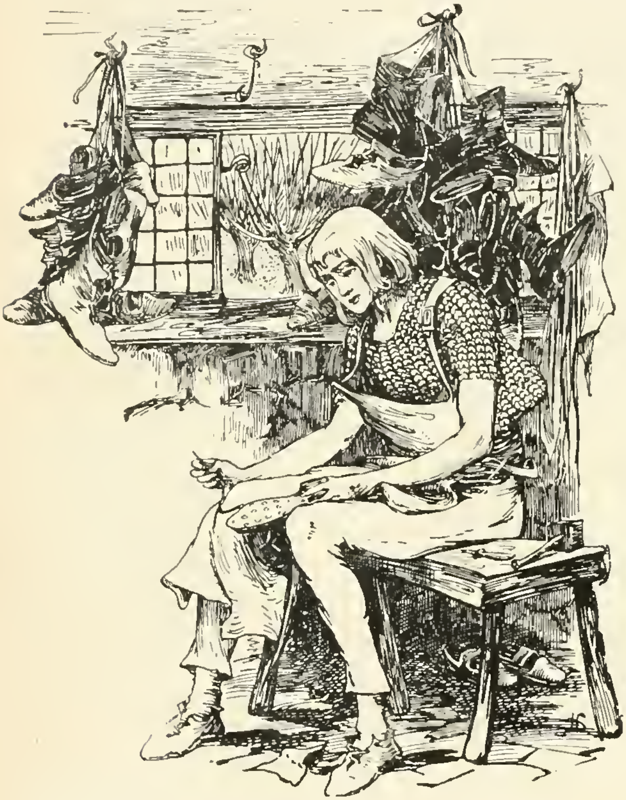
The children were always together at the elder-bush or under the willow, and the little girl sang the most delightful songs with voice as clear as silver bells; in Canute there was not a note of music, but he knew the words, and that is always something. The people in Kjöge, even the ironmonger's wife, stood still and listened to Joan. "That is a sweet voice the little girl has!" she said.

Those were happy days, but they did not last for ever. The neighbours parted company; the little girl's mother was dead and the father was going to Copenhagen to be married again; he would be able to get employment there—he would be a messenger somewhere, and that ought to be a very profitable post. And the neighbours took a tearful farewell, and the children wept bitterly; but the old people promised to write to each other at least once every year. And Canute became a shoemaker's apprentice, for they could not let that big boy go on doing nothing any longer. Also he was confirmed.

Oh, how he wished on that holiday that he could go to Copenhagen and see little Joan! But he did not go; indeed, he had never been there, although it only lies twenty-three miles from Kjöge; but Canute had seen the towers across the bay in clear weather, and on the day of his confirmation he plainly saw the golden cross shining on the Cathedral.

Ah, how often he thought of Joan! But did she remember him? Yes, indeed! Near Christmas there came a letter from her father to Canute's parents, saying that they had done very well in Copenhagen, and that Joan would make a great fortune by her beautiful voice; she had been engaged at the theatre to sing there, and already received some small payment; out of this she sent her dear neighbours at Kjöge a whole dollar for their merry-making on Christmas Eve, that they might drink her health, and she had herself written with her own hand a postscript as follows: "Kind remembrance to Canute!"

They wept all together, and still it was quite delightful; they indeed wept from joy. Every day Joan had been in his thoughts, and now he saw that she also thought of him; and, as the time approached when he would become a journeyman, it became more clear to him that he was attached to Joan and that she must be his little wife; and then a smile played on his mouth, and he drew the thread still more quickly, while his leg pressed against the strap; he quite ran the awl into one of his fingers, but he did not mind. He should certainly not be mute, like those two gingerbreads; the story would be a lesson for him.


HE SHOULD CERTAINLY NOT BE MUTE, LIKE THOSE TWO GINGERBREADS.

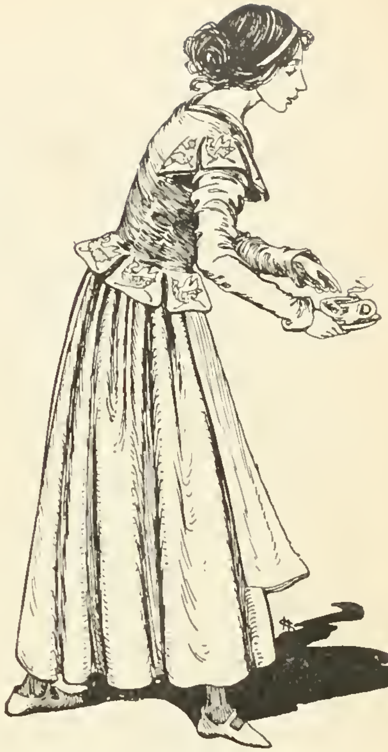
And now he became a journeyman, and packed his knapsack. At last he would go to Copenhagen for the first time in his life, and he had a master there already. Oh, how surprised and pleased Joan would be! She was now seventeen years old, and he was nineteen.

He wished to buy her a gold ring before leaving Kjöge, but he considered that he would be able to get one much more beautiful in Copenhagen; and so he took leave of the old people, and started on foot one autumn day through the drizzling rain; the leaves were falling from the trees; he was wet to the skin when he reached the great city of Copenhagen, and went to his new master.

On his first Sunday he wished to pay a visit to Joan's father. He put on his new workman's clothes, and the new hat from Kjöge which suited him so well, for before this he had always worn a cap. And he found the house which he was looking for, and came up many flights of stairs; it quite made him giddy to see how people had to live over one another in this bewildering city.

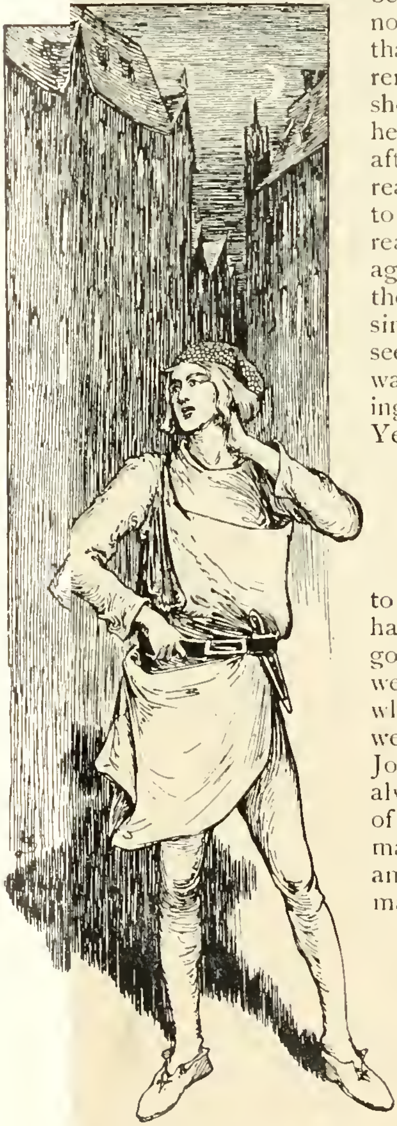
They appeared to be in comfortable circumstances in their parlour, and Joan's father received him in a friendly way. His wife was a stranger to him, but she shook hands and gave him a cup of coffee.

"Joan will be pleased to see you," said the father; "you have become quite a good-looking man! Now you shall see her. She is a girl I am more than satisfied with, by God's blessing. She has her own room, and she pays us for it." And the father rapped quite politely at her door, as if he had been a stranger, and so they went in. But how charming it was! Certainly there was not such a room in the whole of Kjöge, the queen could not have one more delightful! There was a carpet, there were curtains right down to the floor, and a real velvet chair; and all round there were flowers and pictures, and there was a looking-glass that one might easily run into, for it was just as large as a door. Canute saw all this at one glance, and yet he only looked at Joan, for she was a full-grown maiden; quite different from what Canute had imagined her, but much



SHE POURED OUT THE TEA, AND SHE HERSELF OFFERED HIM A CUP.

more beautiful. There was not such a damsel as she in all Kjoge, and how fashionable she was! But though she seemed strange to Canute, it was only for a moment, and then she flew towards him as if she was going to kiss him; she did not do so, but she looked as if she would. Yes, she was certainly glad to see the friend of her childhood! The tears stood in her eyes, and she had so much to ask and to tell him, both about Canute's parents, and the elder and the willow, and she called them Mother Elder and Father Willow, just as if they were human beings; and *that* they had quite as much right to be as the gingerbread cakes had; and she talked of them also, and of their mute affection, and how they lay on the plate and broke in pieces, and then she laughed so heartily — but the blood rushed into Canute's cheeks, and his heart beat with unusual force. No, she had not become at all haughty—and he noticed that it was for her sake that her parents invited him to remain the whole evening; and she poured out the tea, and she herself offered him a cup, and afterwards she took a book and read aloud to them, and it seemed to Canute just as if what she read was about his affection, it agreed so entirely with all his thoughts; and then she sang a simple ballad, but with her it seemed to be an entire story, it was as if her own heart was pouring itself out through the song. Yes, she certainly was partial to Canute. The tears ran down his cheeks, he could not help it, and he could not speak a single word; it seemed to him as if he was quite stupid—and then she pressed his hand and said: "You have a good heart, Canute! be always as you are now."



CANUTE WENT OUT INTO THE TOWN, AND LOOKED UP AT HER WINDOW.

That was a memorable evening: it was certainly not one to sleep after, nor did Canute sleep. When he left, Joan's father had said: "Now, don't quite forget us! Don't let the whole winter go by before you come to see us again!"—and so he could very well come on Sunday, and that he would do. But every evening, when work was over—and they worked by candle-light—Canute went out into the town; he went away through the street where Joan lived, looked up to her window, where there was almost always a light, and one evening he saw quite plainly the shadow of her face on the curtain; that was a charming evening! The master's wife did not like him to go out like this every evening, and she shook her head, but the master laughed: "He is a young man!" he said.

"On Sunday we shall meet, and I will tell her how she is in my thoughts, and that she must be my little wife; certainly I am only a poor shoemaker's workman, but I can become a master; I shall work diligently—yes, I will say that to her; nothing comes of mute affection, I have learnt that from the gingerbreads."

And Sunday came, and Canute came also; but, how unfortunate! they were obliged to tell him that they were all going out. Joan pressed his hand and asked: "Have you ever been to the theatre? You must go for once. I am going to sing on Wednesday, and if you have time I will send you a ticket; my father knows where your master lives."

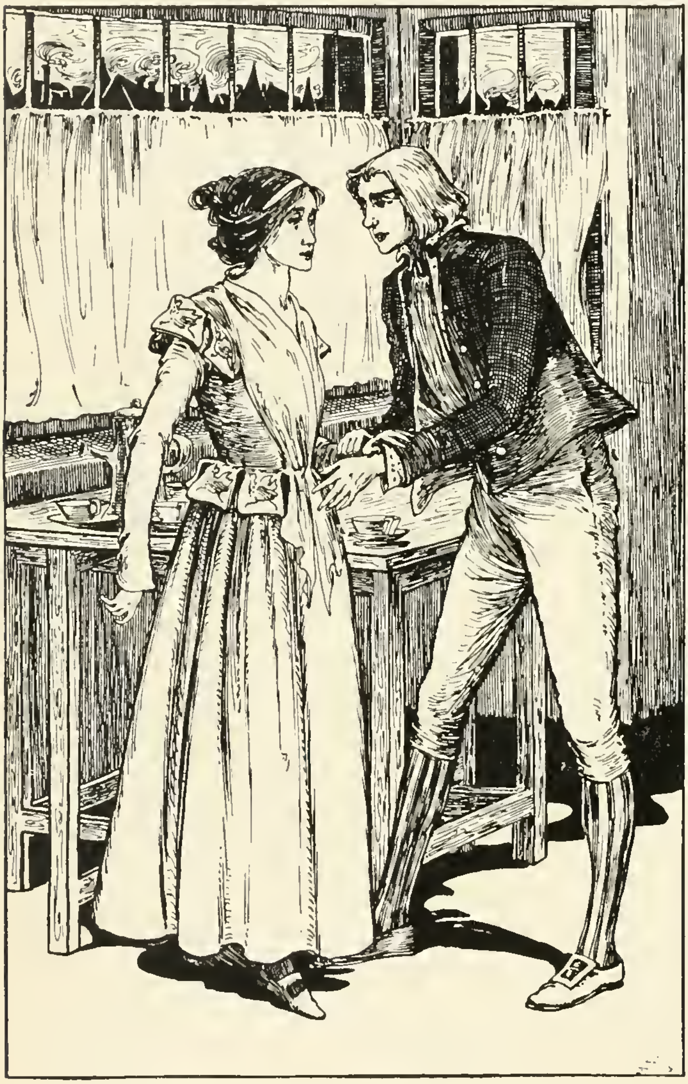
How kind that was of her! At mid-day on Wednesday there came a sealed paper without any writing, but the ticket was inside, and in the evening Canute went for the first time in his life to the theatre; and what did he see? He saw Joan, so charming, so graceful! She was certainly married to a strange person, but that was in a play, something they represented as Canute knew, or else she would never have had the heart to send him a ticket to see it; and everybody clapped and shouted, and Canute cried, "Hurrah!"

Even the king smiled at Joan, as if he was pleased with her. How small Canute felt himself! but he loved her so heartily, and she seemed to be fond of him, and the man ought to speak the first word, so he thought of the gingerbread maiden; much lay hidden in that story.

As soon as it was Sunday, Canute went to their house; his thoughts were as serious as if he was going to the Communion. Joan was alone and received him; it could not be more fortunate.

"It's a good thing that you have come," she said; "I was just going to send my father to you, but I had a feeling that you would come this evening; for I must tell you that I am going to start for France on Friday; I must go there in order to be properly trained."

And it seemed to Canute as if the room spun round—as if his heart would burst; but no tears came into his eyes, although it was easily seen how distressed he was; Joan saw it, and she was on the point of weeping. "Thou honest, faithful soul!" she said. And then Canute's tongue was loosed, and he told her how dearly he loved her, and said that she must be his little wife; and as he said that he saw that Joan turned as pale as death; she let go his hand, and said, earnestly and sorrowfully: "Don't make yourself and me unhappy, Canute; I will always be a good sister to you, whom you may rely on—but more I cannot be." And she stroked her soft hand across his hot forehead. "God gives us strength to do much, if we only set ourselves to the task."


JOAN TURNED AS PALE AS DEATH; SHE LET GO HIS HAND.

And at that instant her stepmother came in.

"Canute is quite sad because I am going away," she said; "but be a man!" and she patted him on the shoulder, and it seemed as if they had been talking of the journey and not of anything else. "Baby!" she said, "now you must be good and sensible, as when we were both children under the willow."

And it seemed to Canute as if a part of the world had gone, his thoughts were like a loose thread blown about by the wind. He remained, though he did not know whether they had invited him, but they were kind and friendly; and Joan gave him tea, and sang—it was not the old tone, and yet it was so wonderfully beautiful that it seemed as if his heart must break. And then they parted. Canute did not put out his hand, but she took it and said: "At least you will shake hands with your sister before you go, old playmate!" And she smiled through the tears which ran down over her cheeks, and she repeated: "Brother!" Certainly that should prove a strong support—that was their farewell.

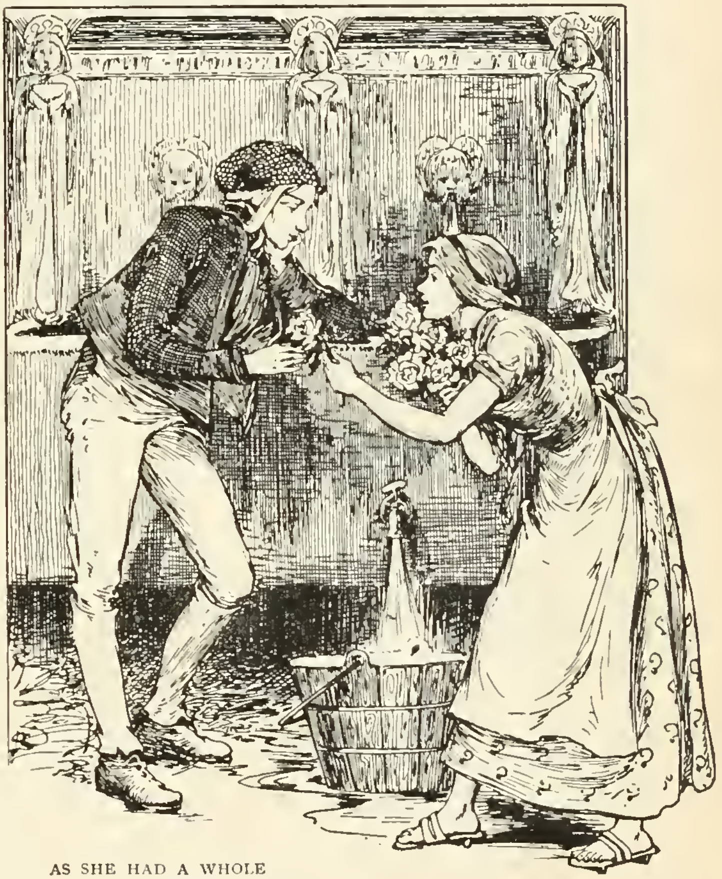
She set sail for France, and Canute went out into the dirty streets of Copenhagen. The other men at the workshop asked him why he went about and meditated in that fashion; he ought to go pleasure-making with them, he was but a young fellow.

And they went together to a dancing saloon; and there were many pretty girls, but certainly no one like Joan; and there, where he thought he should forget her, she appeared vividly in his thoughts. "God gives us strength to do much, if we only set ourselves to the task," she had said to him; and a devout feeling came into his mind, and he folded his hands. And the violins struck up, and the maidens danced around him; he felt quite horror-stricken, he felt that he was in a place where he could not take Joan, and she was with him in his heart—and then he went outside, he rushed through the streets, and went by the house where she had lived; it was dark, everything was dark, empty, and lonely; the world went its own way, and Canute went his.

And then winter came, and the streams were covered with ice; it seemed as if everything was putting itself in order for a funeral.

But then spring came, and the first steamboat started, and he felt such a yearning to get away, far out into the wide world, but he would not go to France.

And so he packed his knapsack and wandered far into Germany, from town to town, without rest or repose; only when he came to the splendid old city of Nuremberg did the running-leather wear out of his shoes and allow him to remain.



AS SHE HAD A WHOLE HANDFUL OF ROSES, SHE GAVE HIM ONE ALSO.

It is a strange old town, as if it was cut out of a pictorial history. The streets run just as they please; the houses do not care to stand in rows; projecting bays with small turrets, spires and statues spring from over the footpath; and, high up from the strangely-formed roofs, gargoyles stretch out over the street shaped like dragons or long, thin dogs.

Canute stood here in the market-place with his knapsack on his back; he stood near one of the old fountains, where the grand bronze figures, biblical and historical, stand between the leaping jets of water. A pretty maid-servant came for some water, and she gave Canute a drink; and as she had a whole handful of roses, she gave him one of them also, and it seemed to him to be a good omen.

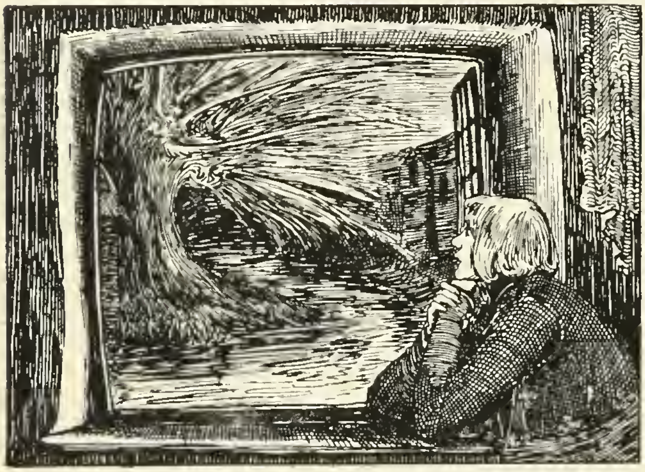
From the church hard by he heard the sound of the organ; it sounded quite homelike, as if it was the church at Kjöge, and he stepped inside the great cathedral; the sun shone through the painted window-panes, between the lofty, slender pillars; there was a devout feeling in his thoughts, his mind became calm.

And he sought and found a good master in Nuremberg, and he remained with him and learnt the language.

The old moat surrounding the town had been transformed into small kitchen-gardens, but the high walls with their massive towers are still standing. The ropemaker twists his ropes on the wooden gallery from the wall into the town, and elder-trees grow out of the crannies and holes, and hang their boughs over the small houses down below; the master that Canute worked for lived in one of these houses, and over the attic window where he slept the elder spread its branches.

He lived here through the summer and the winter, but when the spring came he could not stand it any longer. The elder was in bloom, and it smelled so homelike that it seemed as if he was in the garden at Kjöge—and so Canute left his master and went to another, farther in the town, where there were no elder-trees.

This place was close to one of the old stone bridges, right over a low water-mill that was always rushing. He here found the workshop. Outside there was only a rapid river that was shut in by the houses, which all had old, ricketty balconies, looking as if they might be shaken down into the water. There was no elder here, there was not a single flower-pot with a bit of green in it, but right opposite there was a great, old willow-tree, that seemed to hold fast to the house lest it should be torn away by the stream; it stretched its boughs over the river, exactly as the willow did in the garden by the stream at Kjöge.



RIGHT OPPOSITE THERE WAS A GREAT, OLD WILLOW-TREE.

Certainly he had removed from Mother Elder to Father Willow; the tree here, especially on moonlight evenings, had something which made him feel that

"A Dane he was quite
In the moonlight!"

but that was not at all the effect of the moonshine; no, it was the old willow.

He could not stand that, and for what reason? Ask the willow, ask the flowing elder! And so he said farewell to his master and to Nuremberg, and moved further away.

He did not speak of Joan to any one; he kept his grief to himself, and he found a strange meaning in the story of the gingerbread-cakes; he now understood why the man had a bitter almond in his left side, he had himself a bitter taste of it, and Joan, as she was always gentle and smiling, she was plain gingerbread. It seemed as if the strap of his knapsack pressed him so that he could hardly draw his breath; he loosened it, but that did not relieve him. The world was only half of it outside him, he bore the other half within him, or so it seemed.

It was only when he saw the high mountains that the world appeared great to him; his thoughts now turned themselves outwards, and his eyes were filled with tears. The Alps seemed to him like the earth's wings folded together; suppose it spread them out, extended the mighty feathers with chequered pictures of black forests, rushing streams, cloud, and masses of snow! "At the Day of Judgment the earth will lift its great wings, fly up towards God, and burst like a bubble in His clear rays! Oh, that that day would come!" he sighed.

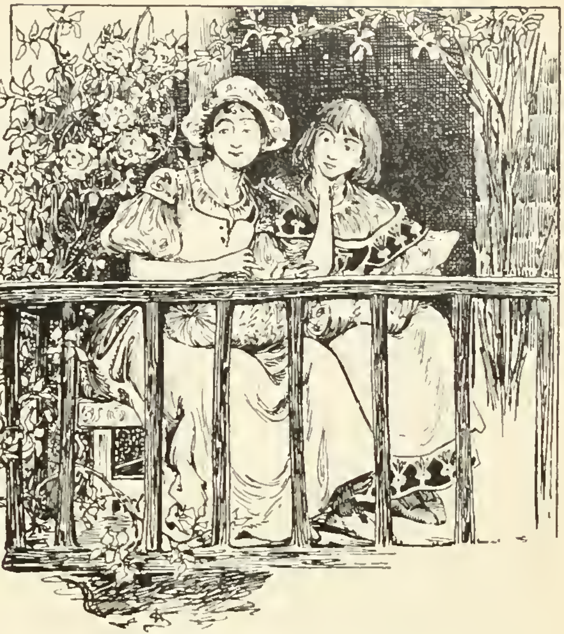
Tranquilly he wandered through the land, it seemed to him a grassy orchard; the girls nodded to him from the wooden balconies of the houses as they made their lace, the mountain-tops glowed in the crimson of the setting sun, and then he saw the green lakes among the dark trees. Then he remembered the shore of the Bay of Kjöge; and there was sadness, but not pain, in his breast.

There where the Rhine rolls onward, like one long billow, and falls, beaten and changed to clear snow-white masses of cloud, as if it were the creation of the clouds—the rainbow flutters like a loose band above it—here he thought of the windmill at Kjöge, where the water rushed and foamed.

Willingly would he have remained in the quiet Rhine town, but here there were many elders and willows—and so he pushed on farther; over the high, mighty mountains, through blasted rocks, and away to paths which clung, like swallows' nests, to the walls of rock. The water rushed in the depth and the clouds lay beneath him; he went over bright thistles, Alpine roses, and snow, in the warm summer sun—and so he said farewell to the lands of the north and came down under chestnut-trees, among vineyards and cornfields. The mountains were a wall between him and his recollections, and so it should be.

There lay before him a great, splendid town which they called Milan, and here he found a German master who gave him work; they were an honest old married couple, on whose workshop he had happened to light. And they became fond of the quiet journeyman, who said so little but worked the more, and was gentle and Christian-like. It was as if God had taken the heavy load from his breast.

It was his chief delight to stand sometimes on the top of the mighty marble church, which seemed to him as if it was made of the snow from his home, and formed into statues, pointed towers, and open halls decorated with flowers; from every corner, from every pinnacle and arch the white statues smiled at him. Overhead was the blue heaven, beneath him was the city and the far-extending green plain of Lombardy, and towards the north the high mountains with the eternal snow—and so he thought of the church at Kjöge with the ivy branches on the red walls; but he did not long after it, here behind the mountains he would be buried.



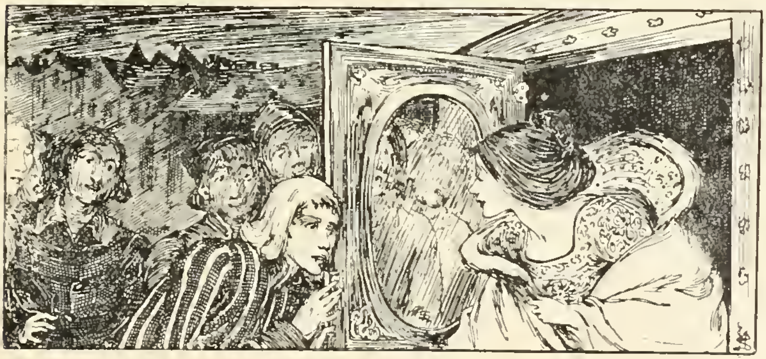
THE GIRLS NODDED TO HIM FROM THE WOODEN BALCONIES OF THE HOUSES, AS THEY MADE THEIR LACE.

He had lived here for one year, and it was three years since he had left his home, when his master brought him out into the town, not to the circus to see feats of horsemanship, but to the great opera-house, and that was a hall that was worth seeing. In seven tiers it was hung with silk curtains, and from the floor up to a dizzy height in the roof there sat the finest ladies, with bouquets in their hands, as if they were at a ball, and the gentlemen were in full dress, and many were wearing silver and gold. It was lighted up like the brightest sunshine, and the music burst forth loud and beautiful. It was more splendid than the theatre at Copenhagen, but then Joan had been there, and here—yes, it was like witchcraft, the curtain was drawn up, and here also stood Joan in gold and silks, with a golden crown on her head; she sang, as only an angel from heaven can sing; she advanced as far as she could, she smiled as only Joan could smile; she looked straight at Canute.

Poor Canute seized his master's hand and shouted aloud: "Joan!" but she could not hear him, the musicians were playing so loud; and the master nodded, and said: "Yes, she certainly is named Joan!" and he took a printed bill and showed him that there stood her name, her full name.

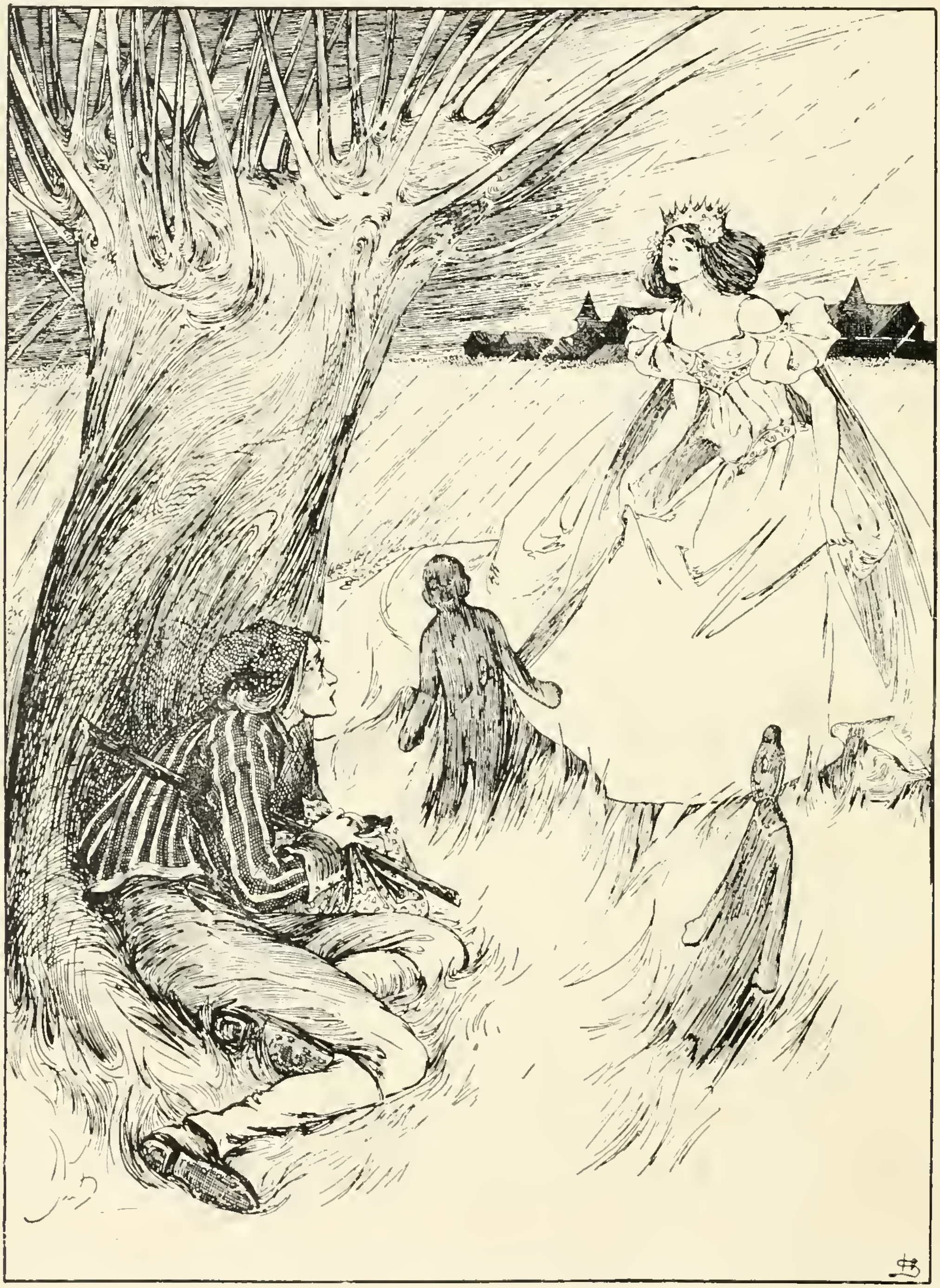
No, that was not a dream! and all the people shouted for her, and threw flowers and wreaths to her, and every time she went they called her again, and she came forward again and again.

But in the street the people crowded about her carriage, and



CANUTE LOOKED RIGHT INTO HER FACE, AND SHE LOOKED RIGHT INTO CANUTE'S FACE, BUT SHE DID NOT RECOGNISE HIM.

themselves drew it—Canute the foremost and joyfullest among them—all the way to her splendid and brilliantly-lighted house; Canute stood close to the carriage door when it was opened and she stepped out, and the light shone full on her beloved face. How she smiled, and thanked them graciously, as if much moved! Canute looked right into her face, and she looked right



AND HERE STOOD JOAN IN ALL HER MAGNIFICENCE, WITH THE GOLDEN CROWN ON.

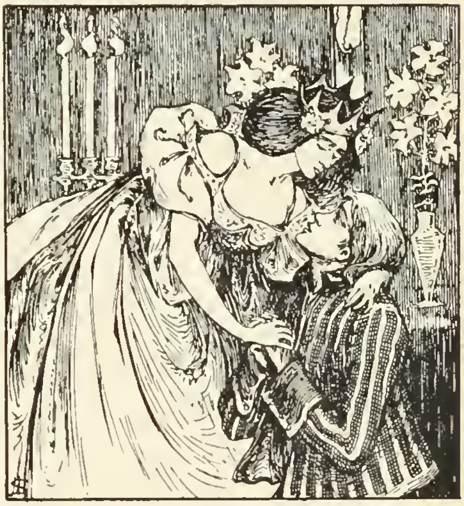
into Canute's face, but she did not know him. A lord, with a star on his breast, gave her his arm—they were engaged, it was said.

And so Canute went home and packed his knapsack; he would—he *must*—go home to the elder and the willow; alas! under the willow.

They entreated him to remain, but no words could hold him back; they said to him that it was towards winter, that the snow was already falling on the mountains; but he said he could walk in the track of a carriage driven slowly—a way would have to be cleared for that—with his knapsack on his shoulder, and leaning on his stick.

And he went to the mountains, up them and down them; worn out, he saw neither village nor house; he still kept towards the north. The stars shone above him, his feet wavered, his head was giddy; stars also shone deep below in the valley, it seemed as if heaven was spread out below him. He felt ill. The stars below him appeared more and more and always growing brighter, they moved hither and thither. It was a little town, where the lights twinkled, and when he understood that, he put forth the remains of his strength and reached a small inn.

He remained here a whole day, because his frame needed rest and care. There was a thaw in the valley and sleet was falling. The following morning there came a hurdy-gurdy man who played a tune of his native Denmark, and Canute could not bear it any longer—he started off, and pushed on day after day, as if it called him to come home before they were all dead together—but he told no one of his longing, no one could believe that he had a heart-ache, the deepest man could have; such a sorrow is not for the world, for it is not amusing, and it is not even for friends, and he had no friends. He was a stranger in a strange land; he would go homewards, to the north! In that single letter from home, which his parents had written to him more than a year ago, were these words: "You are not exactly a Dane as we are at home; we are very fond of our country, but you are fond of a foreign land!" His parents could write that — yes, that was how they judged him.



SHE BENT HER HEAD OVER HIS FACE, AND ICE-COLD TEARS TRICKLED FROM HER EYES.

It was evening, he was walking on the open highway, it began to freeze; the country grew more and more flat, being field and meadow-land. A great willow stood by the path; everything looked so home-like, so Danish, that he sat down under the willow, he felt so weary, his head dropped, his eyes closed for rest, but he felt conscious that the willow stretched its boughs over him. The tree seemed a powerful old man, it was Father Willow himself that raised him in his arms and carried him, like a weary son, home to Denmark, with its open, bleak shore, to the town of Kjöge, to the garden of his childhood. Yes, it was the willow itself from Kjöge, that had gone out into the world to seek and to find him, and now he was found and brought home into the little garden by the rivulet, and here stood Joan in all her magnificence, with the golden crown on, as he had last seen her, and she cried: "Welcome!"

And straight before him stood two strange forms, but they looked much more human than in the days of his childhood. They had also changed. They were the two gingerbread cakes, the man and the woman; they turned the right side to him, and looked well.

"Thank you!" they both said to Canute; "you have loosened our tongues: you have taught us that one ought to express one's thoughts freely, or else nothing will come of them. And now something has come of it! We are engaged!"

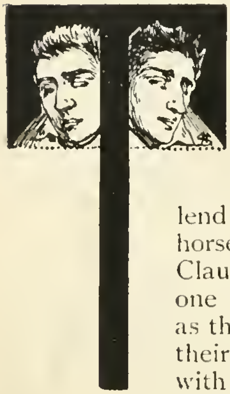
And so they went hand in hand through the streets of Kjöge, and they looked quite respectable; even on the wrong side, there was no fault to be found with them! And they went straight to Kjöge church, and Canute and Joan followed them—they also went hand in hand; and the church stood as of old, with its red walls and the beautiful green ivy; and the great door of the church opened wide, and the organ pealed forth, and the man and woman both went up the aisle. "The master and mistress first!" they said; and they each stepped to one side to make room for Canute and Joan; and they knelt down, and she bent her head over his face, and ice-cold tears trickled from her eyes—it was the ice about her heart melted by his strong love—and they fell on his burning cheeks, and—— At that he awoke, and found himself sitting under the old willow in a strange land, in the cold winter evening; icy hail fell from the clouds and beat upon his face.

"That was the most beautiful hour of my life!" he said; "and it was a dream. O God, let me dream it again!" And he closed his eyes, he slept, he dreamt.

In the morning the snow fell, it drifted over his feet, he was asleep. The villagers went to church; there sat a journeyman, he was dead, frozen to death—under the willow.

* * *

Little Claus and Big Claus



THERE once lived in a village two persons of the same name. Both were called Claus; but one had four horses, while the other possessed only a single horse. In order, however, to distinguish them, the one that owned the four horses was styled Big Claus, while he who had but a single horse was called Little Claus. Now you shall hear how it fared with them both; for this is a true story.

Little Claus was obliged to plough all the week for Big Claus, and to lend him his only horse; and then Big Claus helped him in turn with his four horses, but only once a week, and that was on Sundays. And proudly did Little Claus smack his whip over the five horses, for they were as good as his on that one day. The sun was shining brightly and all the bells were ringing for church, as the people passed by in their holiday clothes and with their prayer-books under their arm, on their way to hear the preacher, when they saw Little Claus ploughing with five horses; and he was so pleased, that he kept smacking the whip, and saying: "Gee-ho, my five horses!"

"You must not say so," quoth Big Claus, "for only one of them is yours."

But no sooner did somebody go past, than Little Claus forgot he was not to say so, and he called out: "Gee-ho, my five horses!"

"Now, really, I wish you would hold your tongue," said Big Claus; "for if you say that again, I'll knock your horse on the head, so that he shall drop down dead on the spot; and then there will be an end of him."

"I won't say it again—indeed I won't," said Little Claus. But when some more people came past and nodded to him, and bade him good-morning, he was so pleased, and thought it looked so well for him to have five horses to plough his field, that he smacked the whip, and cried: "Gee-ho my five horses!"

"I'll gee-ho your horse for you!" said Big Claus; and snatching up a hammer, he knocked. Little Claus's only horse on the head, so that he dropped down quite dead.

"Now I have no horse left," said Little Claus, weeping. He afterwards took the horse's skin off, dried it in the wind, and then put it into a bag, which he slung upon his back, and went to a neighbouring town to sell it.

He had a long way to go, and was obliged to cross a thick, gloomy forest, where he was overtaken by a storm. He lost himself completely; and before he could find his way again, evening had already set in, and he was too far off either to reach the town or to go back home, before it would be completely dark.

Near the road stood a large farm. The shutters were closed outside the windows, still the light shone through at the top. Little Claus thought he might, perhaps, obtain leave to spend the night under cover, so he went and knocked at the door.

The farmer's wife opened the door; but when she found what he wanted, she told him to go his ways, for her husband was not at home, and she could not take in strangers.

"Well, then, I must lie down outside," said Little Claus, as the farmer's wife slammed the door in his face.

Close by there stood a haystack, and between it and the house was a little shed, with a smooth, thatched roof.

"I can lie up there," thought Little Claus, on perceiving the roof, "and a capital bed it will make. I suppose the stork won't fly down to bite my legs." For a live stork was standing above on the roof, where he had built his nest.

Little Claus now crept up on the shed, where he laid down, and turned himself about in order to get a comfortable berth. The wooden shutters outside the windows did not reach to the top, so that he could see into the room.

There stood a large table loaded with wine, roast meat, and excellent fish. The farmer's wife and the sexton were sitting at table all alone, and she was pouring him out wine, while he was busy with his fork in the fish, for it was his favourite dish.

"I should like to get a bit of that," thought Little Claus, stretching out his head close to the window. Goodness! what nice pastry he did see, to be sure! It was a regular feast.

He now heard some one riding towards the farmhouse, and this was the woman's husband coming home.

He was a very good sort of man, but he had an odd prejudice: namely, he could not bear the sight of a sexton; and if he saw one, he fell into a rage. That was the reason why the sexton had gone to see his wife in his absence; and the good woman had given him the best of everything she had to eat. But when she heard her husband coming she was frightened, and she begged the sexton to conceal himself in a large empty chest. This he did, for he knew the husband could not bear to see a sexton. The wife then hid the wine, and popped all the nice things into the oven; for if her husband had seen them, he would, of course, have asked for whom they had been dished up.

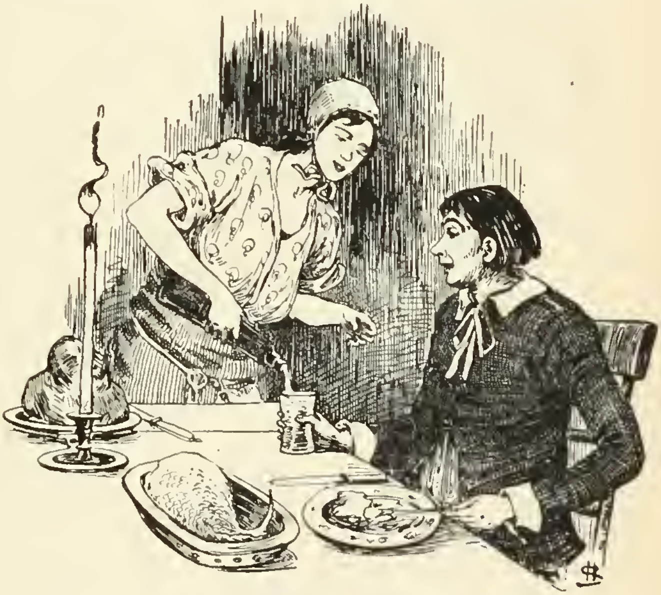
"Oh, dear!" sighed Little Claus, on his shed, when he saw all the eatables disappear.

"Is there any one above?" asked the farmer, looking up at Little Claus. "Why are you lying there? Come rather into the house with me."

Now Little Claus told him how he had got lost, and begged leave to spend the night at the farm.

"That you shall do," said the farmer, "but we must first have something to eat."

The woman welcomed them both in a friendly manner, and spread a long table, and gave them a large dish of gruel. The farmer was hungry, and ate with a good appetite; but Little Claus could not help thinking of the nice roast-meat, the fish, and the pastry, that he knew was hid in the oven.



SHE WAS POURING HIM OUT WINE, WHILE HE WAS BUSY WITH HIS FORK IN THE FISH.

He had laid the bag containing the horse's skin which he had set out to sell in the next town, under the table at his feet. He did not relish the gruel, so he trod on his bag, when the dried skin squeaked aloud.

"Hush!" said Little Claus to his bag, at the same time treading upon it again, when it squeaked much louder than before.

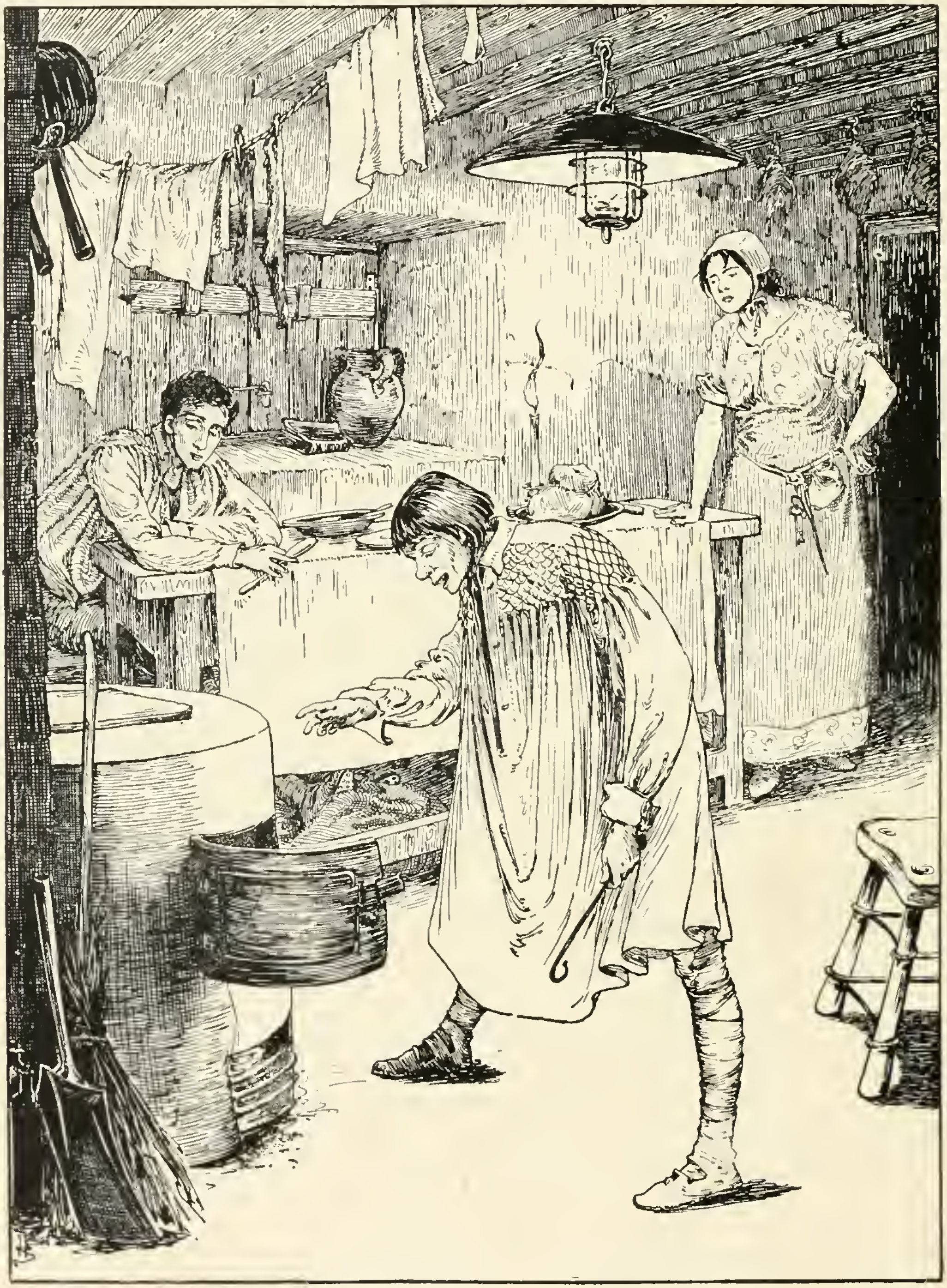
"Holloa! What's that you've got in your bag?" asked the farmer.

"Oh, it is a magician," said Little Claus, "and he says we ought not to be eating gruel, when he has conjured the oven full of roast-meat, fish and wine."

"Zounds!" said the farmer, hastily opening the oven, where he found all the nice, savoury viands which his wife had concealed in it, and which he believed the magician in the bag had conjured up for them. The wife did not say a word, but laid the things on the table; and they ate of the fish, the roast-meat, and the pastry. Little Claus now trod again upon his bag, so that the skin squeaked.

"What says he now?" inquired the farmer.

"He says," answered Little Claus, "that he has conjured us three bottles of wine, which are standing in the corner, near the stove." So the woman was obliged to fetch out the wine she had hid, and the farmer drank, and was right merry. He would have liked vastly to have had such a magician as Little Claus carried about in his bag.



"ZOUNDS!" SAID THE FARMER, HASTILY OPENING THE OVEN.

" Can he conjure up the Evil One ? " inquired the farmer ; " I should like to see him, now I'm in a merry mood."

" Yes," said Little Claus ; " my magician will do anything that I please. Won't he ? " asked he, treading on the bag till it squeaked. "You hear he answers 'Yes,' only the Evil One is so ugly that we would rather not see him."

"Oh, I'm not afraid. What will he look like?"

"He will look the living image of a sexton."

"Nay, that's ugly indeed!" said the farmer. "You must know I can't abide seeing a sexton. But never mind—as I shall know it is the Evil One, I shall bear the sight more easily. Now, I'm all courage! Only he must not come too near me."

"Now, I'll ask my conjurer," said Little Claus as he trod on the bag and stooped his ear.

"What does he say?"

"He says that you may go and open that chest in the corner, and you'll see the Evil One cowering inside it; only you must hold the lid fast, so that he should not escape."

"Will you help me to hold it?" asked the farmer; and he went up to the chest into which his wife had put the sexton, and who was sitting inside in a great fright.

The farmer opened the lid a little, and peeped in. "Oh!" cried he, jumping backwards, "now I've seen him, and he is exactly like our sexton. It was a shocking sight!"

So thereupon he must needs drink again, and they drank on till the night was far advanced.

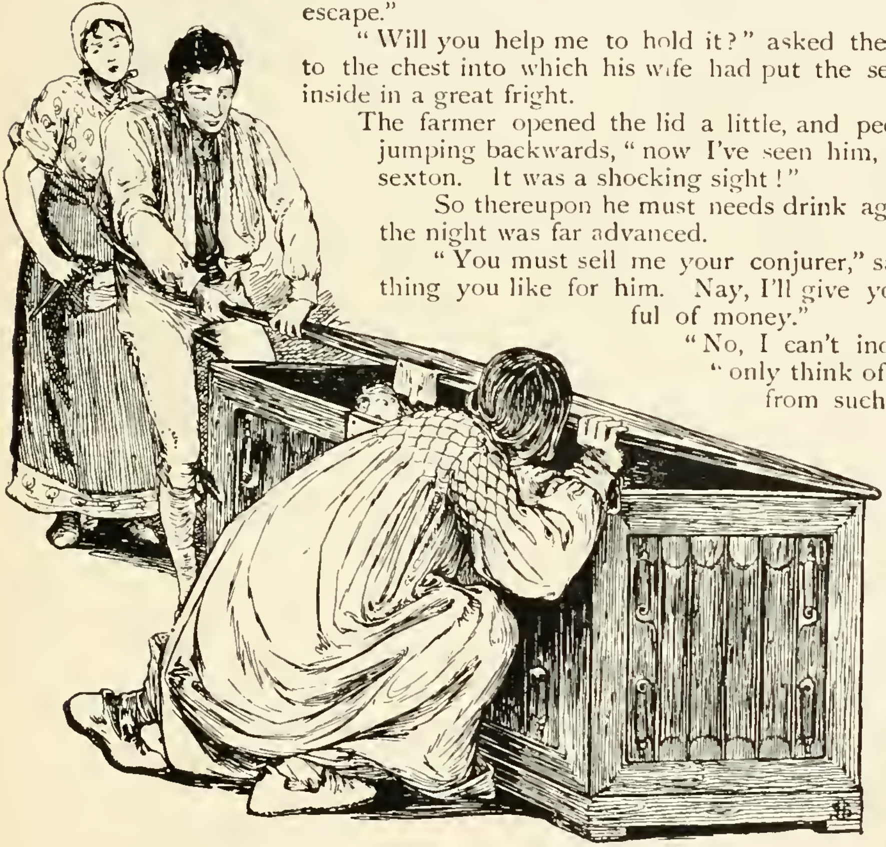
"You must sell me your conjurer," said the farmer; "ask anything you like for him. Nay, I'll give you at once a whole bushelful of money."

"No, I can't indeed!" said Little Claus; "only think of all the benefit I can derive from such a conjurer."

"But I should so like to have him," said the farmer, and continued entreating.

"Well," said Little Claus at length, "as you were so kind as to give me a night's shelter, I won't say nay. You shall have the conjurer for a bushel of money, only it must be full measure, mind you."

"You shall have it," said the farmer. "But you must take away the chest with you, for I wouldn't let it stay an hour longer in the house, there's no knowing but what he may still be inside it."



THE FARMER OPENED THE LID A LITTLE, AND PEEPED IN.

Little Claus then gave the farmer his bag containing the dried skin, and received a bushel of money—full measure—in exchange. The farmer gave him a wheelbarrow into the bargain, to enable him to take away the chest and the bushel of money.

"Farewell!" said Little Claus, and away he went with his money and the large chest containing the sexton.

At the other end of the forest was a broad, deep river, whose waters were so rapid that one could hardly swim against the tide. A new bridge had just been built over it. Little Claus now stopped in the middle of the bridge, and said, loud enough to be heard by the sexton—"What shall I do with this stupid chest? It is as heavy as if it were filled with a stone. I am tired of trundling it any further, so I'll throw it into the river; if it swims after me till I reach home, it's all well and good—if not, I don't care."

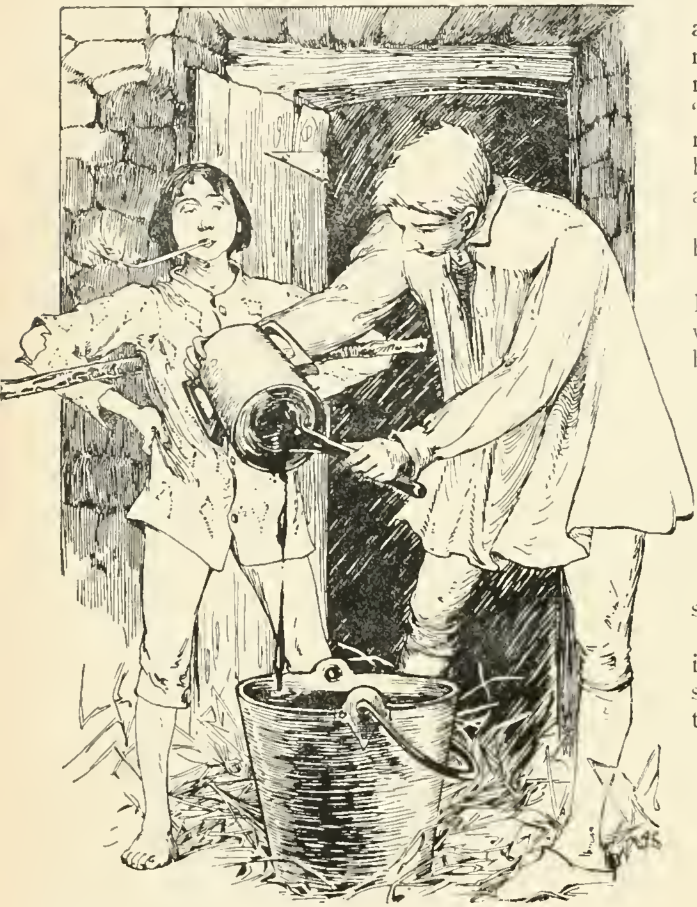
He then seized hold of the chest, and began to lift it up a little, as if he were going to throw it into the water.

"Leave it alone!" cried the sexton inside the chest; "let me out first."

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said Little Claus, pretending to be frightened; "he is still inside! I must make haste and fling him into the river, that he may get drowned!"

"Oh! no, no, no!" cried the sexton; "I'll give you a whole bushelful of money if you will set me free."

"That is something like!" said Little Claus, opening the chest. The sexton crept out, pushed the empty chest into the water, and went home, where he measured out a whole bushel of money for Little Claus. As he had already received one from the farmer, his wheelbarrow was now full of coins.



"WHAT CAN HE WANT IT FOR?" THOUGHT BIG CLAUS, AS HE SMEARED THE BOTTOM OF IT WITH TAR.

"I have been well paid for the horse, at all events," said he to himself, when he had reached home, and had shaken out all the money into a heap on the floor of his room. "It will vex Big Claus when he hears how rich I have become through my only horse; but I shan't tell him exactly how it all came about."

He now sent a lad to Big Claus to borrow a bushel.

"What can he want it for?" thought Big Claus, as he smeared the bottom of it with tar, that some particles of what was to be measured might stick to it. And sure enough this came to pass; for on receiving back the bushel, three new silver half-florins were adhering to the tar.

"How comes this?" said Big Claus; and running off to Little Claus, he inquired: "Where did you get so much money?"

"Oh! it was given me for my horse's skin, which I sold yesterday."

"It is pretty handsomely paid for, seemingly," said Big Claus, who ran home, and seizing a hatchet, knocked his four horses on the head, and then took their skins to town to sell.

"Skins! skins! who'll buy skins?" he cried through all the streets.

A number of shoemakers and tanners came and inquired what he asked for them.

"A bushel of money for each," said Big Claus.

"Are you crazy?" cried they; "do you think we measure money by the bushel?"

"Skins! skins! who'll buy skins?" cried he once more; but to all who asked the price of them he answered: "A bushel of money."

"He means to make game of us," said they; and the shoemakers took up their stirrups, and the tanners their leather aprons, and fell to belabouring Big Claus's shoulders. "Skins! skins!" cried they, mocking him; "I'll warrant we'll tan your skin for you till it is black and blue. Out of the town with him!" hooted they, and Big Claus ran as fast as he could, for he had never been beaten so thoroughly before.

"Little Claus shall pay me for this!" said he, on reaching home; "I'll kill him for his pains."

Meantime Little Claus's old grandmother had died in his house. She had always been very cross and very unkind to him; still he was sorry, and he put the dead body into his warm bed, to see if it would not bring her back to life. Here he left her all night, while he sat in a corner, and slept in a chair, which he had often done before.

In the middle of the night, the door opened, and in came Big Claus with his hatchet. He knew the place where little Claus's bed stood, and therefore went right up to it, and knocked the old grandame on the head, thinking it must be Little Claus.

"There!" said he; "now you'll not play off any more of your tricks on me!" and he then went home.

"What a wicked man!" thought Little Claus. "He wanted to kill me. It was lucky for my old grandame that she was already dead, or he would have put an end to her life."

He now dressed his old grandmother in her holiday clothes, borrowed a horse of his neighbour, and harnessed it to his cart, and then placed the old grandame on the back seat, so that she should not fall out when he began to drive, and away they went through the forest. By sunrise they had reached a large inn, at which Little Claus stopped, and went in for some refreshment.

The landlord was a wealthy man, and he was a good one too; only as passionate as if he had been made of pepper and snuff.

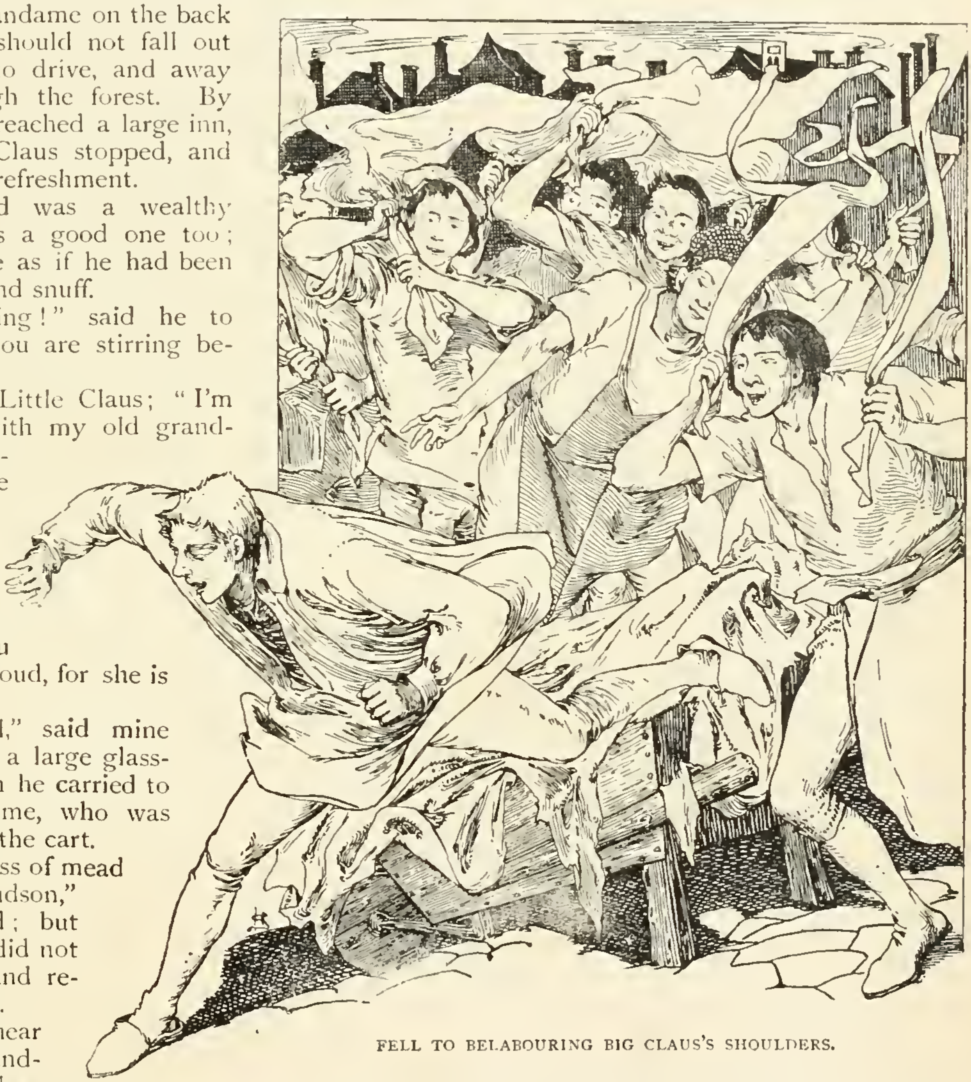
"Good-morning!" said he to Little Claus; "you are stirring betimes to-day."

"Yes," said Little Claus; "I'm going to town with my old grandmother. She's outside there, in the cart; for I can't well bring her in. Perhaps you will take her a glass of mead. Only you must speak very loud, for she is hard of hearing."

"Yes, I will," said mine host, pouring out a large glassful of mead, which he carried to the dead grandame, who was sitting upright in the cart.

"Here's a glass of mead from your grandson," said the landlord; but the dead woman did not answer a word, and remained stock still.

"Don't you hear me?" said the landlord. "Here's a glass of mead from your grandson." This he bawled out a third time, and then a fourth; but as she did not stir, he flew into a passion, and flung the mead into her face, right across her nose, when she fell backwards over the cart; for she had only been set up, and not tied fast.



FELL TO BELABOURING BIG CLAUS'S SHOULDERS.

"Holloa!" cried Little Claus, rushing to the door, and seizing hold of the landlord; "you have killed my grandmother. Look! here's a great hole in her forehead!"

"What a misfortune!" exclaimed the landlord, wringing his hands. "This all comes of my hasty temper! My dear Little Claus! I'll give you a bushel of money, and I'll have your grandmother buried, as if she were my own, if you will but say nothing about what has happened; for else my head will be struck off, and that would be rather disagreeable, you know."

So Little Claus received a whole bushel of money, and the landlord buried the old dame, as if she had been his own grandmother.

When Little Claus had once more reached home with his load of money, he immediately sent a lad to Big Claus to borrow a bushel of him.

"What's the meaning of this?" said Big Claus. "Haven't I struck him dead? I must look into the matter myself." And so he went over himself with the bushel to Little Claus's dwelling.

"Why, where did you get all that money?" asked he, in great astonishment on beholding the addition to his neighbour's wealth.

"You killed my grandmother instead of me," said Little Claus; "so I've sold her for a bushel of money."

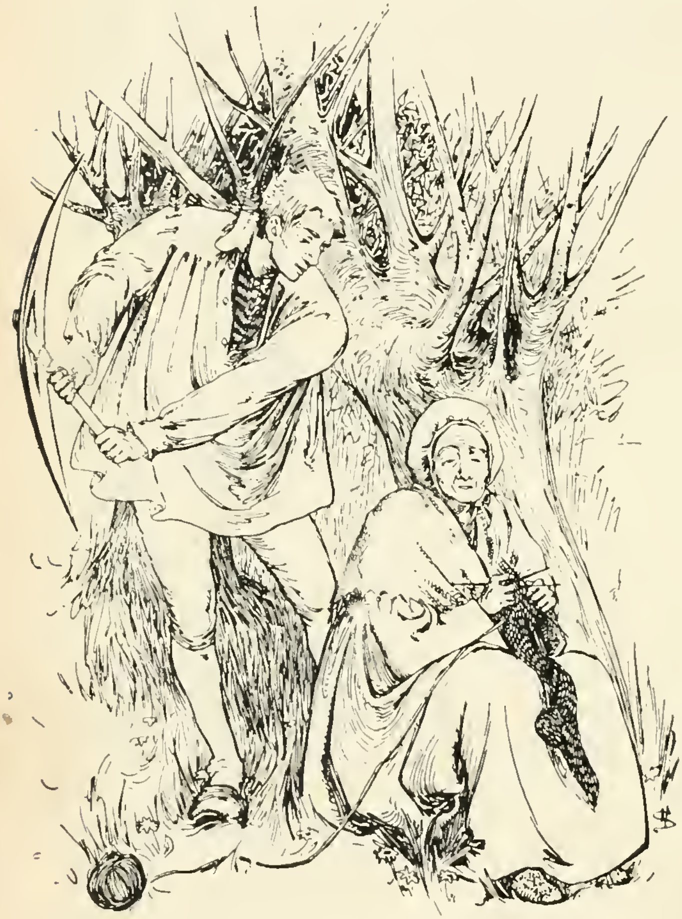
"That's handsomely paid for, at all events!" quoth Big Claus; and hastening home, he seized his axe and killed his old grandmother at a blow; after which, he placed her in a cart, and drove to a town where an apothecary lived, and asked if he would purchase a dead body.

"Whose is it? and how did you come by it?" asked the apothecary.

"It is my grandmother's," said Big Claus! "I struck her dead to get a bushel of money in exchange."

"Lord help us!" said the apothecary; "you are out of your mind! Don't say such things, or your head will be in jeopardy." And he now dilated on the heinousness of the deed he had committed, and told him he was a most wicked man, and would assuredly be punished; all of which frightened Big Claus to such a degree, that he ran out of the apothecary's shop, jumped into his cart, and drove home like mad. But as the apothecary, and everybody else, believed him to be beside himself, they let him go wherever he pleased.

"You shall pay me for this," said Big Claus, the moment he was on the high-road—"that you shall, little Claus!" And the moment he reached home, he took the largest bag he could find, and went to Little Claus, and said: "You have played me another trick: I first killed my horses, and now I've killed my old grandmother, and all through your fault; but you shall never play me any more tricks." And he seized hold of Little Claus, and popped him into his bag, which he slung across his shoulder, saying: "Now, I'll go and drown you!"



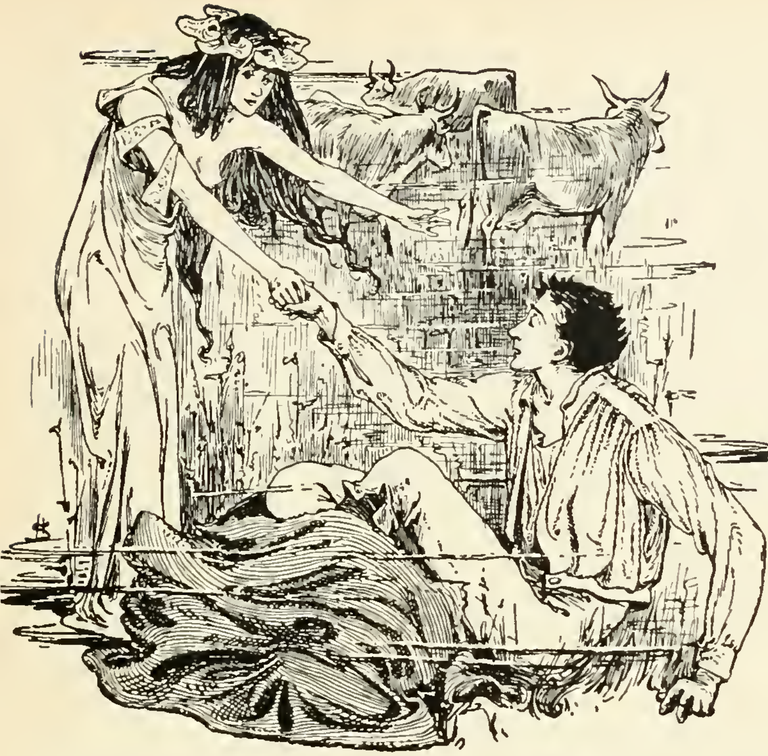
SEIZED HIS AXE, AND KILLED HIS OLD GRANDMOTHER AT A BLOW.

He had a long way to go before he reached the river, and Little Claus was none of the lightest to carry. On passing by the church, the organ was pealing forth, and the people were singing so beautifully! So Big Claus set down his load beside the church-door, and thought he might as well go in and hear a psalm before he went any further. He felt certain Little Claus could not get out, and everybody was inside the church; so in he went.

"Heigh-ho!" sighed Little Claus, turning and twisting about in the bag, but without being able to untie the string. An old grey-haired drover, with a large staff in his hand, chanced to come by: he was driving a flock of cows and bullocks, and as they pushed against the bag containing Little Claus, he was thrown down.

"Heigh-ho!" sighed Little Claus; "I'm very young to be already bound for the kingdom of heaven!"

"And I," said the drover, "who am so old, have not yet had the good luck to reach it."



"THE MOMENT I FELL UPON IT . . . THE LOVELIEST GIRL IMAGINABLE . . . TOOK ME BY THE HAND."

"Open the bag," cried Little Claus, "and creep into it instead of me, and you will go to heaven in a trice."

"With all my heart," said the drover, and opened the bag, when out sprang Little Claus in a moment.

"But will you take care of my cattle?" said the old man, creeping into the bag, which Little Claus had no sooner closed, than he went his ways with all the cows and bullocks.

Soon after, Big Claus went out of the church, and slung his bag over his shoulder, though it seemed to him as if it had become somewhat lighter; for the old drover was not half so heavy as Little Claus. "How light he now seems!" quoth he. "That comes of my having heard a psalm." So he went towards the river, that was broad and deep, and flung the bag and the drover into the water, exclaiming, in the belief that it was Little Claus: "There you may lie! and now you won't be able to play me any more tricks."

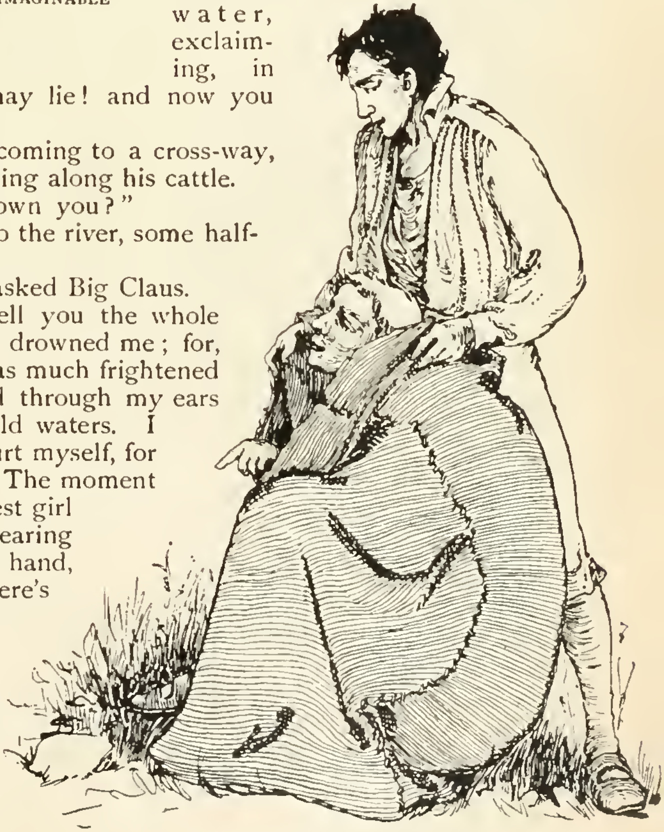
Thereupon, he began to walk home; but, on coming to a cross-way, who should he meet but Little Claus, who was driving along his cattle.

"How's this?" said Big Claus. "Didn't I drown you?"

"Yes," said Little Claus; "you threw me into the river, some half-hour ago."

"But where did you get all this fine cattle?" asked Big Claus.

"It is sea-cattle," said Little Claus. "I'll tell you the whole story, and thank you into the bargain for having drowned me; for, since I have escaped, I shall be very wealthy. I was much frightened while I was still in the bag, and the wind whistled through my ears as you flung me down from the bridge into the cold waters. I sank immediately to the bottom; but I did not hurt myself, for the softest and most beautiful grass grows below. The moment I fell upon it, the bag was opened, and the loveliest girl imaginable, dressed in snow-white robes, and wearing a green wreath on her wet hair, took me by the hand, saying: 'Is that you, Little Claus? First of all, there's some cattle for you. A mile further down the road, there is another herd that I will make you a present of.' I now perceived that the river is a great high-road for the sea-folks. They were walking and driving below, from the sea far away into the land, to the spot where the river ceases. And it was so beautiful, and there were such a quantity of flowers, and the grass looked so fresh! The fishes that were swimming in the water shot past my ears, just as the birds do



"THERE'S NO FEAR ABOUT THAT," SAID LITTLE CLAUS; STILL HE PUT A LARGE STONE INTO THE BAG.

here in the air. And what handsome people there were! and what splendid cattle were grazing on the dykes and ditches!"

"But why have you returned hither so soon?" asked Big Claus. "I should not have done so, since it is so beautiful below."

"Why," said Little Claus, "it is a piece of policy on my part. You heard me say, just now, that the sea-nymph told me, that a mile further down the road—and by road she meant the river, for she can't journey any other way—there was another large herd of cattle for me. But I, who know the river's many windings, thought it rather a roundabout way; so I preferred making a short cut, by coming up to land, and crossing right over the fields back to the river; by doing which, I shall save almost half a mile, and shall reach my sea-cattle all the sooner."

"Oh, what a lucky man you are!" exclaimed Big Claus. "Do you think that I, too, should obtain some sea-cattle, if I went down to the bottom of the river."

"No doubt you would," said Little Claus; "only I can't carry you in a bag to the river, for you are too heavy; but if you like to go there, and then creep into the bag, I would throw you in, with all the pleasure in the world."

"Thank you!" said Big Claus. "But if I don't get any sea-cattle by going down, I'll beat you famously when I return."

"No—now, don't be so hard upon me," said Little Claus. And then they went to the river. The cattle, being very thirsty, no sooner saw the water, than they ran down to drink.

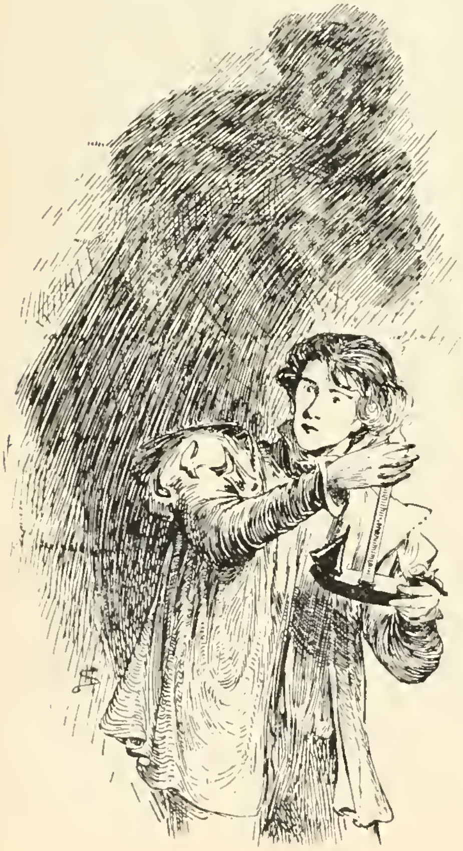
"Look what a hurry they are in!" said Little Claus. "They are longing to be below again."

"Now, make haste and help me," said Big Claus, "or else you shall be beaten." And he crept into the large bag, that had been lying across the back of one of the bullocks. "Put in a stone, for fear I should not sink," said Big Claus.

"There's no fear about that," said Little Claus; still, he put a large stone into the bag, and then gave it a push.

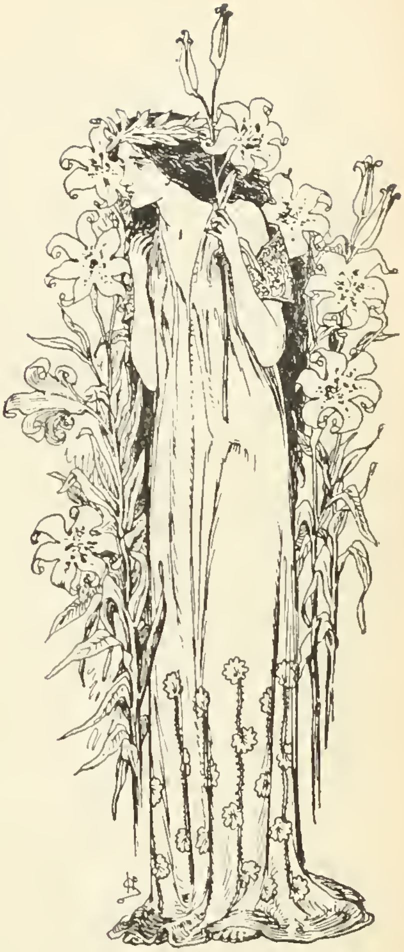
Plump! into the river fell Big Claus, and immediately sank to the bottom.

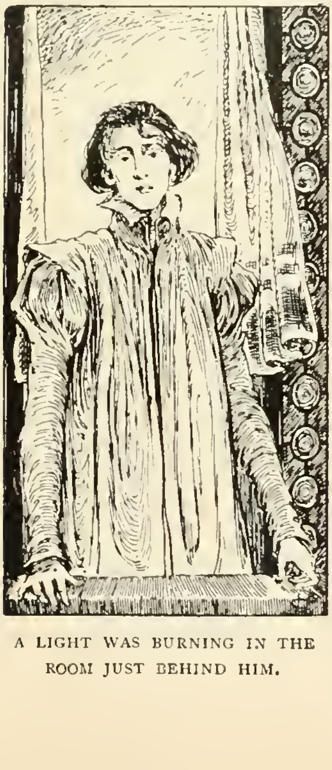
"I am afraid he won't find the cattle," said Little Claus; and away he drove his own beasts home.



The Shadow

IN tropical climates, where the sun is very powerful, people are as brown as mahogany; and in the torrid zone the inhabitants are burnt to negroes. It was to the former class of warm latitudes that a learned man once travelled from a cold country. He fancied that he should be able to ramble about as he did at home; but he soon found the fallacy of such an idea. He was obliged to remain indoors, like all rational people, and to keep the shutters and doors closed the livelong day; so that it looked as if the whole household were asleep, or as if everybody had gone out. But the narrow street, with its tall houses, in which he dwelt, was built in such a manner that the sun shone upon it from morning till night: it was really quite unbearable! The learned man from the cold districts was young and clever. It seemed to him as if he were peeping into a glowing furnace, and this made such an impression on him that he grew thin, and even his shadow shrivelled up and became much smaller than it was at home; moreover, the sun took it away, such as it was, and it only existed in the evening, after the sun had set. It was quite a pleasure to look at it. No sooner was light brought into the room than the shadow stretched all up the wall, and even to the very ceiling, so tall did it become; for it required a good stretching to recover its strength. The learned man went out into the balcony to stretch himself; and as soon as the stars peeped forth from the clear blue sky, he felt somewhat revived. People now began to appear at all the balconies in the street — for in warm climates every window has its balcony, and fresh air one must breathe, however accustomed one may be to the *mahoganizing* process—so it was a very lively scene from top to bottom of the houses. Shoemakers and tailors, and all other folks of the same sort, sat out in the street below; tables and chairs were brought out, tapers were lighted—ay, by thousands—and one chatted, and another sang, while promenaders passed to and fro, carriages drove along, and mules trotted to the "tingle-lingle-ling" of the bells on their harness; and dead bodies were buried, amidst dirges and the tolling of church-bells. Yes, indeed, it was a most busy scene down below in the street. A single house, which stood right opposite the one inhabited by the foreign learned man, formed an exception to the general bustle, and was quite quiet. And yet somebody lived there, for there were flowers in the balcony, that bloomed most beautifully in the heat of the sun, which they could not have done had they not been watered; therefore, somebody must water them: consequently, there must be inmates in the house. Besides, the doors were half-opened towards evening; only it was dark, at least in the front rooms: and, moreover, music might be heard coming from the interior of the house. The foreign learned man thought the music peculiarly enchanting; but it is barely possible this might be only fancy, for he thought everything most delightful in warm latitudes, if there had but been no sun. The foreigner's landlord said he did not know who had hired the house opposite; nobody was to be seen, and as to the music, he thought it most abominably tiresome. "It is just as if some one sat practising a piece which he could not master. It is always the same piece, too. 'I shall finish by conquering it,' he says, I suppose; but he will not, let him try as long as he may."


IN THE MIDST OF THE FLOWERS STOOD A SLENDER, LOVELY MAIDEN.


A LIGHT WAS BURNING IN THE ROOM JUST BEHIND HIM.

The foreigner once woke in the night—he slept with the balcony door open—and as the wind raised the curtain, it seemed to him that a wonderful brightness was streaming from the balcony of the house opposite. All the flowers looked like flames of the most beautiful colours, and in the midst of the flowers stood a slender, lovely maiden. She, too, seemed streaming with light, and it quite dazzled his eyes; but then, to be sure, he had but just opened them, and awoke out of his sleep. He jumped out of bed at a bound, and crept softly behind the curtain; but the maiden had already disappeared, the brightness had vanished, the flowers were no longer flaming, though they stood there as beautiful as ever. The balcony door was ajar, and from the inside of the house was wafted the sound of music, so exquisite that it might have lapped one in Elysian dreams. It was like magic. Who could live there? Where was the real entrance to the dwelling?—for, both in the main street and in the side lane, the whole ground-floor was a series of shops, and the people could not always come out and in through them.

One evening the stranger sat in his balcony: a light was burning in the room, just behind him; and it was, therefore, quite natural that his shadow should fall on the opposite house.

So, as he sat amongst the flowers on his balcony, every time he moved his shadow moved likewise.

"I verily think my shadow is the only live thing that is to be seen in the house opposite," said the learned man. "See how prettily it sits there between the flowers. The door is only ajar, therefore the shadow ought to be clever enough to step in, look about him, and then come back and tell me what he has seen. Ay, then you would be of some use," added he in joke. "Be so good as to step in now, will you?" And then he nodded to the shadow, and the shadow nodded in return. "Now go; only don't stay away for good." And the foreigner rose, and the shadow on the balcony opposite rose likewise; and the foreigner turned round, and the shadow turned round also: and had anybody observed it, he might have plainly seen the shadow going in through the half-open door of the balcony of the opposite house, at the very same moment that the foreigner returned to his room and drew the long curtain over the glass door.

On the following morning, the learned man went out to drink coffee and to read the newspapers. "How is this?" said he, when he stood in the sunshine: "I have lost my shadow! It seems that he really went away yesterday evening, and has not returned. This is a sad thing."

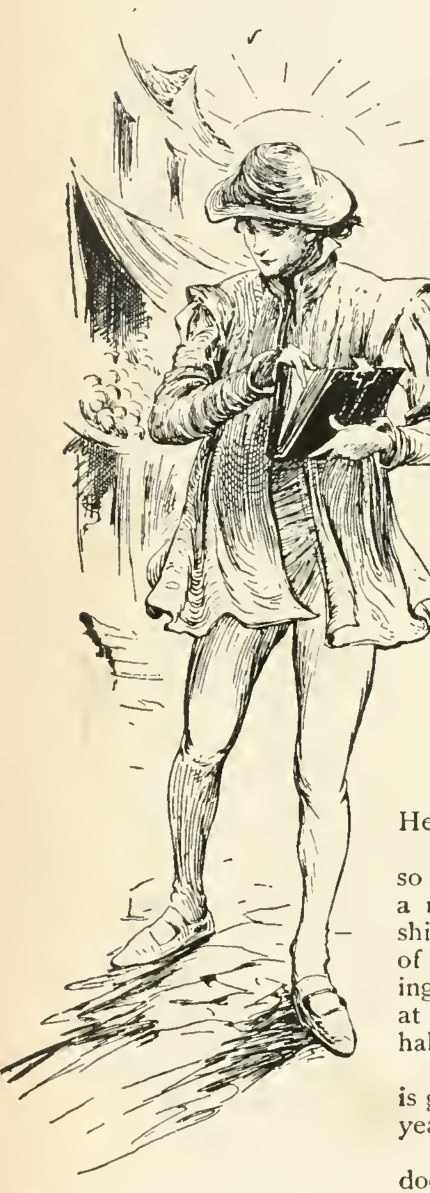
And it vexed him sorely; not so much that the shadow was gone, as because he knew that there was a story of a man without a shadow, and everybody in his country knew this story: so that, when he should return home and relate his own adventure, people would say he was only mimicking the original story; and there was no need for him to have such things said of him. So he determined not to speak of it, and a sensible resolution it was.

In the evening he again went out upon his balcony, having previously taken care to place the light behind him, for he knew that a shadow will always have his master to screen him; but he could not entice him out. He made himself little, and then tall; still no shadow was there, and no shadow would come. He cried, "Hem! ahem!"—but that was of no use.

It was distressing enough; but in tropical climates everything grows so fast that in the course of a week he perceived, to his great joy, that a new shadow had sprouted out of his legs, when he stood in the sunshine; so he felt satisfied that the root had remained. In the course of three weeks he had a very respectable shadow, which continued growing on his voyage back to the northern latitudes: so that it became at last so tall and so stout that he might very well have parted with half of it.

On his return home, the learned man wrote books about all that is good, and true, and beautiful in this world; and days flew past, and years went by—many years, indeed, rolled over his head.

One evening, as he sat in his study, a slight tap was heard at the door. "Come in," said he; but no one came. So he opened the door, and there stood before him a person of such extraordinary thinness that he felt a strange sensation creep over him. In other respects the stranger was very elegantly dressed, and seemed to be a very gentlemanly person.



HE PERCEIVED, TO HIS GREAT JOY, THAT A NEW SHADOW HAD SPROUTED OUT OF HIS LEGS.

"Whom have I the honour of addressing?" said our bookworm.

"Ay, I thought you would not recognise me," said the gentlemanly stranger. "I have become so corporeal that I have actually acquired flesh and clothes. You never thought to see me in such a condition. Do you not know your old shadow? Ay, you never believed that I should return. I have been extremely lucky since I was last with you: I have become very wealthy in every respect; and if I had a mind to purchase my freedom from service, I have ample means at my disposal to do so." And he rattled a number of costly trinkets hanging to his watch, and fingered a thick gold chain that he wore round his neck; besides which, diamond rings sparkled on all his fingers, and none of it was mock jewellery.

"No; I cannot recover from my surprise," said the learned man. "What does it all mean?"

"Something rather out of the common way, to be sure," said the shadow. "But you are not an every-day sort of a man yourself; and you know I have trodden in your footsteps ever since your childhood. As soon as you found that I was old enough to make my way in the world alone, you let me follow my own devices, and I am now in the most brilliant circumstances; only I had a kind of hankering to see you once more before you die, and I wished to see this place again, because one has always a sneaking kindness for one's native country. I know that you have got another shadow—now, do I owe either you or him any money? Do but have the goodness to tell me."

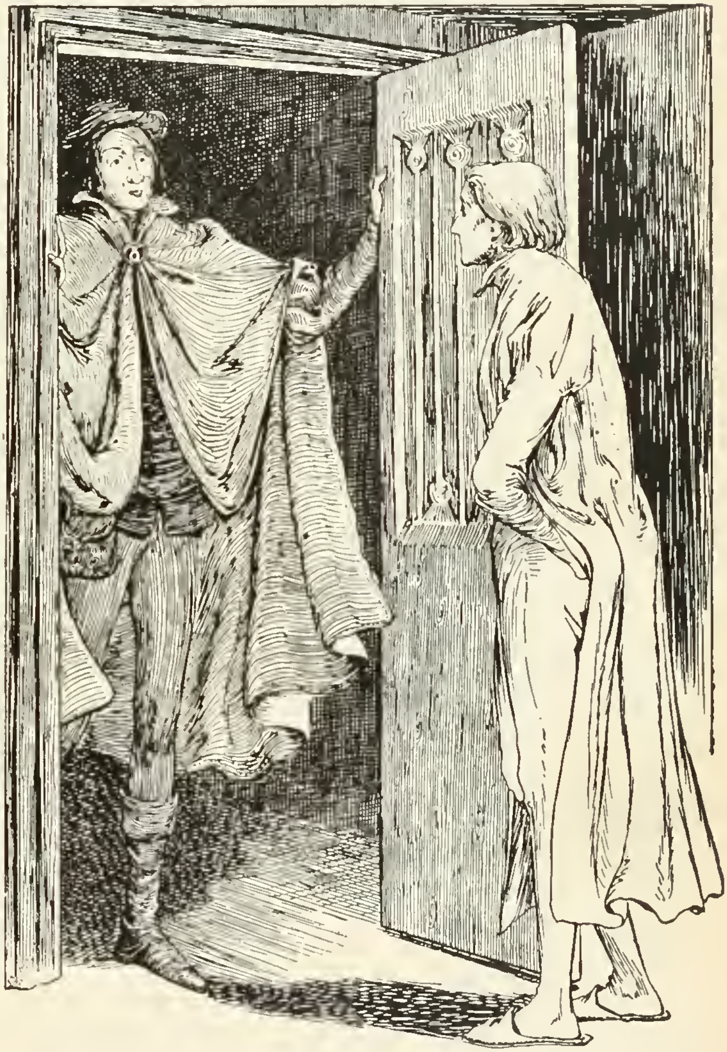
"No—is it really you?" said the learned man. "This is a most remarkable occurrence. I never thought that one could see one's old shadow become a human being."

"Only tell me what I owe you," said the shadow; "for I don't like to remain in anybody's debt."

"How can you talk so?" said the learned man. "What can you possibly owe me? You are as free as anybody else. I rejoice extremely at your good fortune. Sit down, my old friend, and pray tell me how it all happened, and what you saw in the house opposite mine, in the tropical land yonder."

"Yes, I will tell you," said the shadow, sitting down; "only you must promise me, in return, that you will never tell anybody in this city, let us meet where we may, that I have been your shadow; for I have some thoughts of marrying, having more than sufficient to support a family."

"Be easy on that score," said the learned man; "I will tell nobody who you really are. You may rely upon my promise. Here is my hand upon it, which is all-sufficient between men of honour."



"COME IN," SAID HE; BUT NO ONE CAME. SO HE OPENED THE DOOR.

"Between a man and a shadow of honour," said the shadow, correcting him.

It was really quite remarkable how much he had assumed the appearance of a man. He was dressed in a complete suit of black, of the finest cloth, patent-leather boots, and a close-folding hat, which could be pressed together so as to leave nothing visible but the top of the crown and the rim; not to speak of the watch-trinkets, the gold chain, and the diamond ring we have already mentioned. The shadow was, in fact, extremely well dressed; and it was, indeed, his clothes that made a complete man of him.

"Now I will tell you what you wish to know," said the shadow, placing his feet, with the patent-leather boots, as hard as ever he could on the arm of the learned man's new shadow, that lay at his feet like a poodle. This was either out of pride, or, perhaps, merely to enforce upon the new shadow to stick to his master. But the new shadow lay quite still, in order to listen attentively; for he, too, wished to learn how a shadow could be discharged and grow to be his own master.

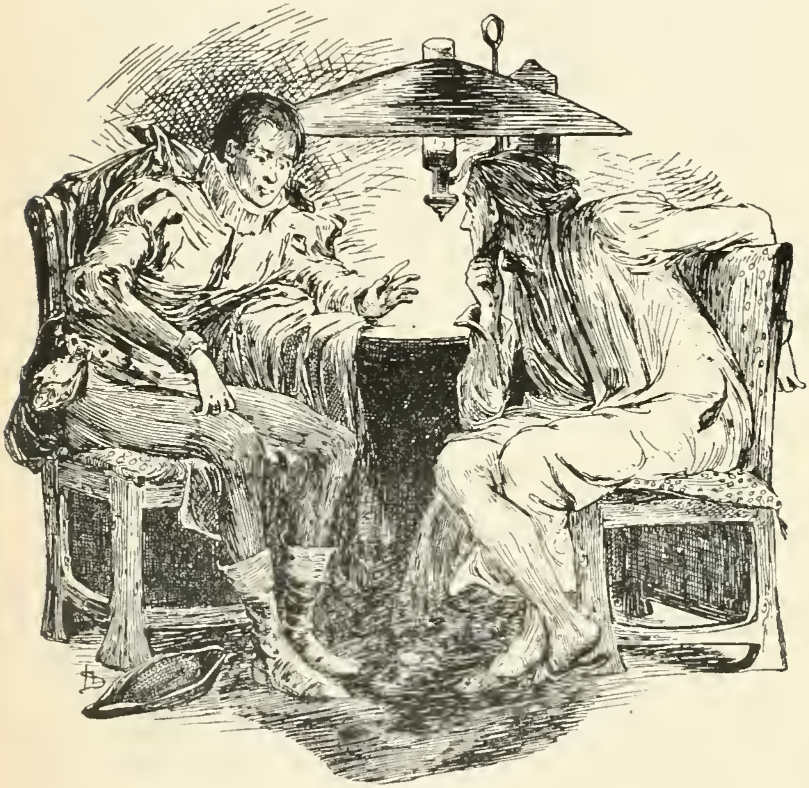
"Do you know who lived in the house opposite?" said the shadow. "It was the most delightful being in the world—namely Poetry. I stayed there three weeks, and that was just as good as if one could live three thousand years, and read all the verse and prose that has been written. And I may say, for it is strictly true, that I have seen everything, and that I know everything."

"Poetry!" exclaimed the learned man. "Ay, she often takes up her abode, hermit-fashion, in large towns. Poetry! Well, I saw her for one short moment, only my eyes were full of sleep. She stood on the balcony, as radiant as an aurora borealis, surrounded by flowers that seemed living flames. Tell me—pray, tell me. You were on the balcony, and then went through the glass door; and what then?"

"Then I found myself in the ante-room," said the shadow. "You were still sitting and looking towards the ante-room opposite you. There was no light in it, though it was pervaded by a kind of twilight; but the doors of a whole suite of rooms stood open, and they were all lighted up. Indeed, such a mass of light would have killed me, had I penetrated as far as the presence of the maiden herself. But I was prudent, and took time, as one ought to do."

"And then what did you see?" said the learned man.

"I saw everything, as you shall hear; but—and this is really no arrogance on my part—as a free agent, and as a person possessing the extensive knowledge I am master of, to say nothing of my position in the world and my affluent circumstances, I wish you would speak a little less familiarly, and now and then remember to say 'sir.'"[1]



"YES, I WILL TELL YOU," SAID THE SHADOW, SITTING DOWN.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the learned man. "It comes of old habit, which is not easily got rid of. You are quite right, and I will bear your remark in mind. But pray continue, sir, and tell me what you saw."

"Everything," said the shadow; "for I saw everything and I know everything."

"How did it look inside the rooms?" asked the learned man. "Was it like a cool grove? or was it like a holy temple? Were the rooms like the starry sky which one sees from the top of high mountains?"

"Everything was there," said the shadow. "It is true I did not quite enter, for I remained in the twilight of the ante-room, but even there I was extremely well off. I saw everything and know everything. I have, in short, been in the waiting-room at the court of Poetry."

"Then what did you see? Did all the gods of ancient times pass through the large rooms? Did the heroes of past ages fight there? Did lovely children play there and tell their dreams?"

"I tell you that I was there, and therefore you may think that I saw everything that was to be seen. If you had gone there you would not have remained a human being, but I became one. And I immediately learned to understand my inward essence, and my natural affinity to Poetry. It is true that I did not think much about it when I used to be with you; but you may remember that I was wonderfully large both at sunrise and sunset; that in the moonshine I was almost more visible than yourself—but I did not then understand my inward essence, whereas in the ante-room it was revealed to me, and I became a human being! I came out again in full maturity, but you had left the tropical latitudes. As a man, I felt ashamed to go about in the state I was in; I wanted boots, and clothes, and the exterior varnish by which a man is recognised; so I went my ways—I don't mind telling you, for you won't put it into a book—I went my ways under cover of a pastry-cook's gown, beneath which I concealed myself, while the woman little dreamed how much she was harbouring. It was not till evening that I ventured out. I ran about the streets in the moonshine; I drew myself up to my full height along the walls, which tickled my vanity very agreeably; I ran up and down, peeped through the highest windows in the rooms, and through the roof; I looked into places where nobody could look, and I saw what nobody saw, and what nobody was to see. After all, the world is a bad world, and I would not be a human being were it not an established fact that they are reckoned of some importance in the scale of creation. I saw the most incredible things on the part of wives, husbands, parents, and 'sweet, incomparable children.' I saw what no mortal has the power of knowing, but what they all would delight to know—namely, evil of their neighbours. Had I written a newspaper, it would have been read with avidity; instead of that I wrote straight to the persons themselves, and there arose a general panic in all the towns I visited. They were so afraid of me, and they loved me so dearly! The professor made a professor of me; the tailor gave me new clothes (my wardrobe is amply supplied); the overseer of the mint struck coins for me; the women said I was handsome: and so I became the man I now am. And now I must bid you adieu. Here is my card; I live on the sunny side of the street, and am always at home in rainy weather." And thereupon the shadow went away.

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[1] In the original he requests him to drop the "thee" and "thou," and say "you"; which being unsuitable to the English idiom, has been replaced by an equivalent.—NOTE, TRANS.

"It is very remarkable!" said the learned man.

Days and years flew by, when the shadow returned once more.

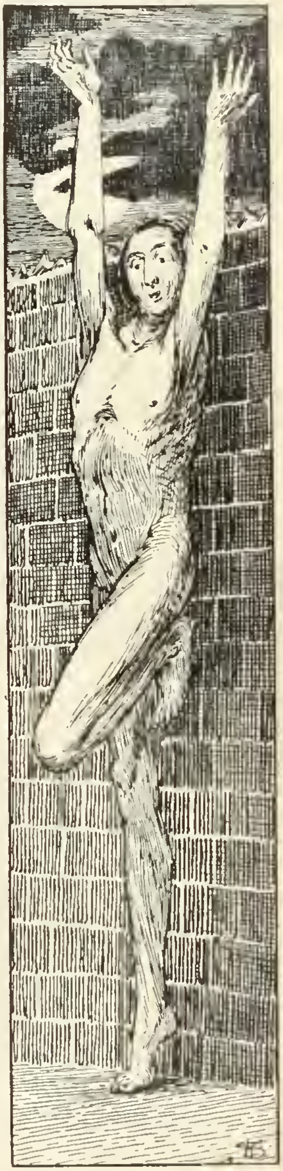
"How are you?" said he.

"Alas!" said the learned man, "I write on the true, the good, and the beautiful, but nobody cares to hear anything about such topics. I am quite in despair, for I take it to heart."

"That is what I never do," said the shadow. "I grow stout and fat, and everybody should endeavour to do the same. You do not understand the world; you will grow ill at this rate—you ought to travel. I am going a journey in the summer; will you accompany me? I should like to have a travelling companion; will you come with me as my shadow? It would afford me great pleasure. I will pay your travelling expenses."

"Are you going far?" asked the learned man.

"That's according as people reckon," said the shadow. "A journey will do you good. If you choose to be my shadow, your travelling expenses shall be defrayed."



I DREW MYSELF UP TO MY FULL HEIGHT ALONG THE WALLS, WHICH TICKLED MY VANITY VERY AGREEABLY.

"This is too absurd," said the learned man.

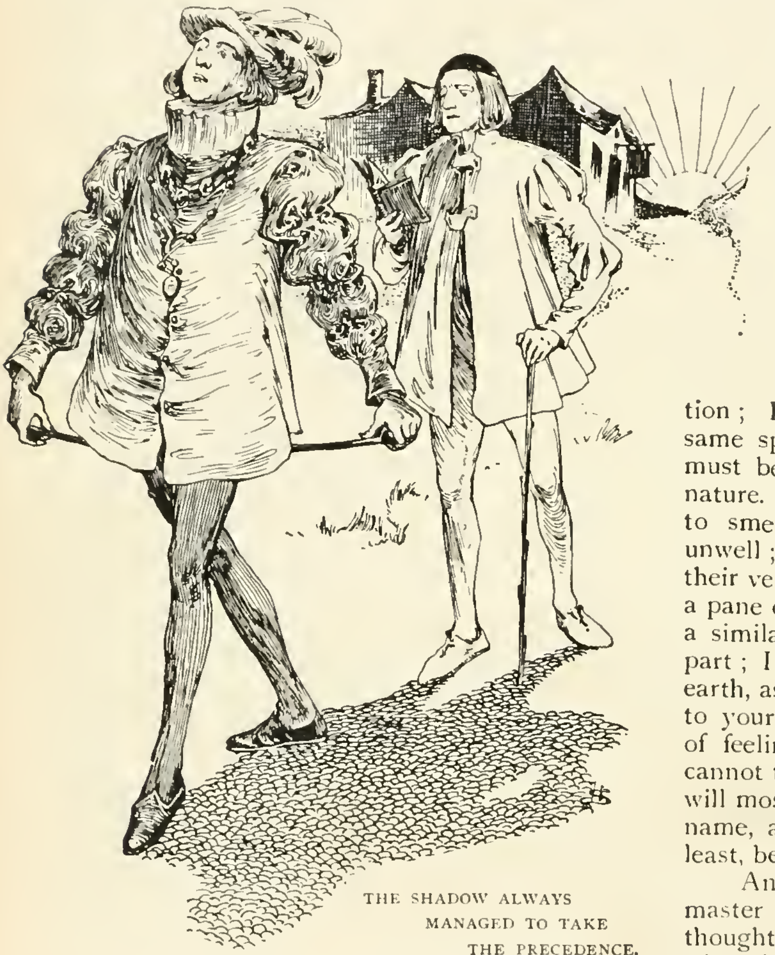
"But it is the way of the world," said the shadow, "and so it will remain," and away he went.

Matters went badly with the learned man. Care and sorrow pursued him, and all that he said about the true, the good, and the beautiful was *caviare* to the multitude, or, to speak more familiarly, pearls before swine. He at length fell ill.

"You really look like a mere shadow," people would say to him; when a cold shudder would creep over the learned man, for he had his own thoughts on the subject.

"You must go to some watering-place," said the shadow, who came to pay him a visit. "There is no other chance for you. I will take you with me, for the sake of old acquaintance. I will pay for your journey, and you can make a description of it, which will serve to entertain me on the road. I want to visit a watering-place, for my beard does not grow as it ought; that is a sort of illness, too: and a beard I must have. Now do be rational and accept my offer, and we will travel like friends."

And so they started on a journey. The shadow was now master, while the master had turned shadow. They drove with one another, they rode and walked together, both side by side, or before and behind one another, just as the sun happened to stand. The shadow always managed to take the precedence, but the learned man was not wounded at his doing so, for he had a very good heart, and was extremely mild, and of a friendly disposition. So one day the master said to the shadow: "As we have now become fellow-travellers, and have grown up together from our childhood, shall we not drink to our good fellowship? Would it not be more friendly to call each other by our names?"



THE SHADOW ALWAYS MANAGED TO TAKE THE PRECEDENCE.

"What you say," replied the shadow, who was now really the master, "was spoken in a very well-meaning and straightforward intention; I will therefore reply in exactly the same spirit. You, who are a learned man, must be well aware how capricious is human nature. There are persons who cannot bear to smell brown paper, for it makes them unwell; others experience a sensation through their very marrow if a nail is scratched along a pane of glass: now, for my part, I experience a similar sensation at any familiarity on your part; I feel myself, as it were, crushed to the earth, as I was in my former position relative to yourself. You may perceive it is a matter of feeling and not of pride. But, though I cannot tolerate any familiarity on your part, I will most willingly call you by your Christian name, and then half of your wish will, at least, be fulfilled."

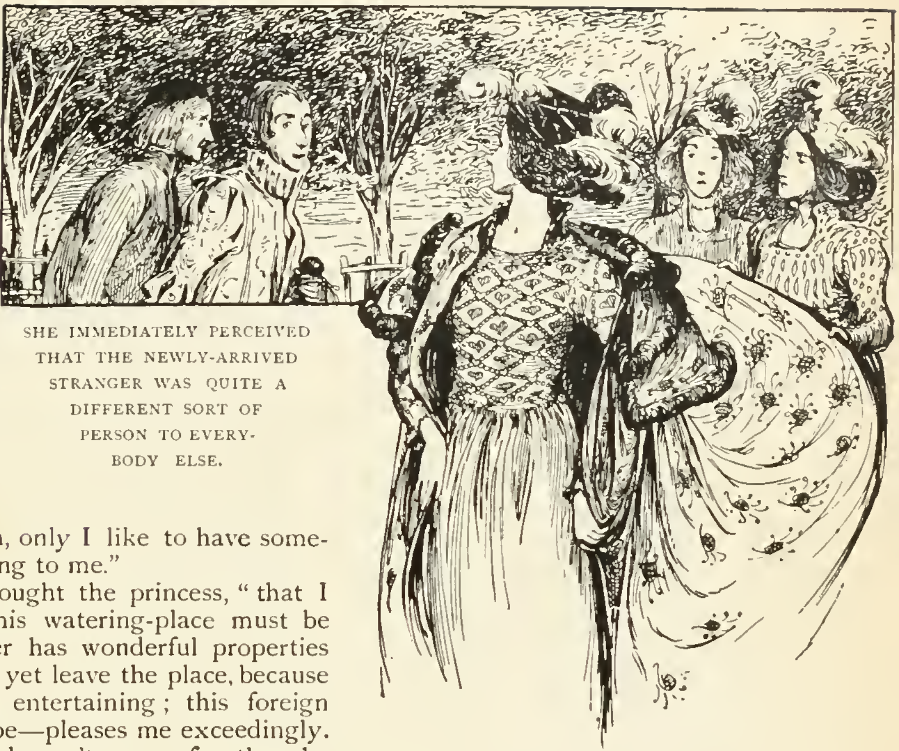
And so the shadow called his former master by his name. "It is rather too bad," thought the latter, "that I must call him 'sir,' while he addresses me by my name,"—still, he was obliged to put up with it.

They arrived in a watering-place where there were many foreigners, and, amongst others, the daughter of a king, a most beautiful creature, who had the disease of being too sharp-sighted, which was very alarming.

She immediately perceived that the newly-arrived stranger was quite a different person to everybody else. "They say that he is come here to get his beard to grow, but I can perceive that the real reason is, that he is unable to cast a shadow."

She now became curious about the matter, and therefore, while on the promenade one day, she entered into conversation with the foreign gentleman. Being a king's daughter, she was not obliged to stand upon ceremony, and therefore said bluntly to him, "Your disease is, that you cannot cast a shadow."

"Your royal highness must be on the high way to your recovery," said the shadow. "I know that your complaint consists of being too sharp-sighted; but you have now seemingly got over it

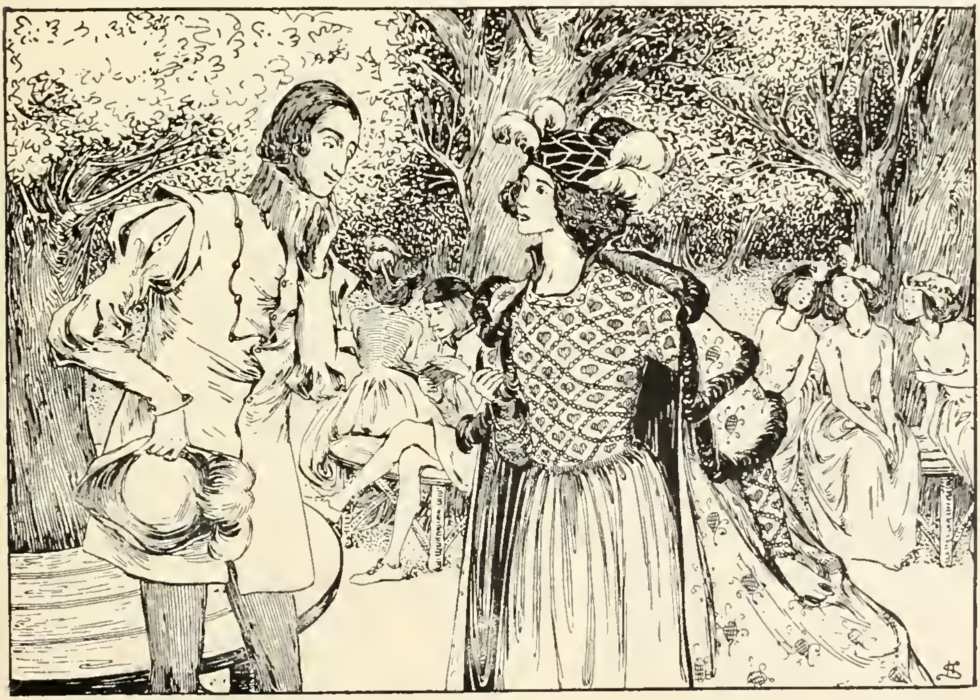


SHE IMMEDIATELY PERCEIVED THAT THE NEWLY-ARRIVED STRANGER WAS QUITE A DIFFERENT SORT OF PERSON TO EVERYBODY ELSE.

completely: I happen to have a most unusual shadow. Do you not see the person who is always by my side? Other people have a usual sort of shadow, but I cannot endure commonplace things. Persons often give their servants finer cloth for their liveries than they make use of for their own wear, and in like manner I have been pleased to trick out my shadow like a man—nay, you may perceive that I have even furnished him with a shadow, which is rather an expensive whim, only I like to have something out of the way belonging to me."

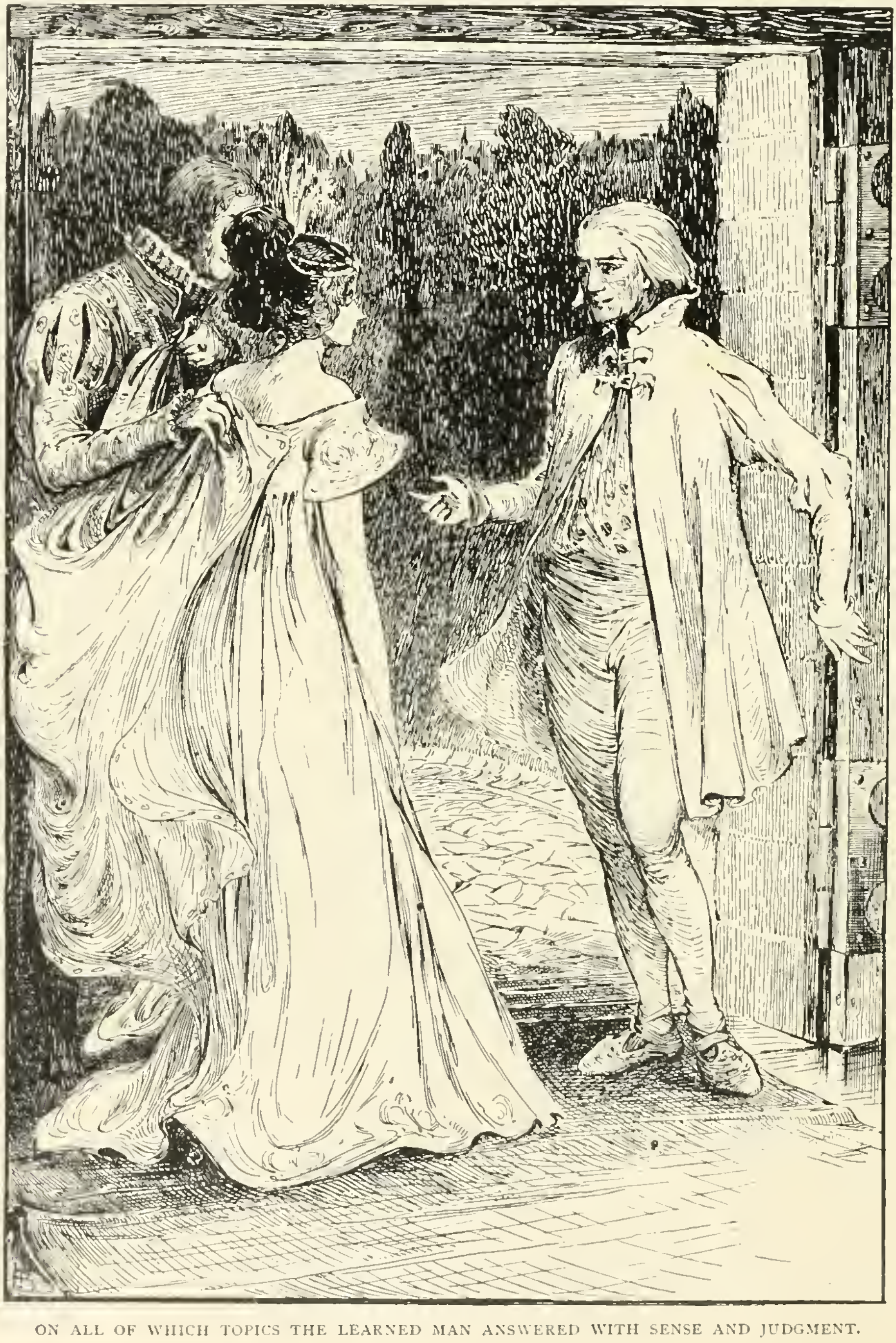
"Can it be possible," thought the princess, "that I should have recovered? This watering-place must be the best in the world; water has wonderful properties in our times. But I will not yet leave the place, because it now begins to be very entertaining; this foreign prince—for prince he must be—pleases me exceedingly. It is to be hoped his beard won't grow, for then he would be off directly."

In the evening, the king's daughter and the shadow danced together in the large assembly-room. She was light, but he was lighter still—she had never seen such a dancer before. She told him from what country she came, and he knew the country; he had been there when she was not at home, and had peeped through the palace windows both below and above: he had heard this, that, and the other, and could therefore answer the king's daughter, and make allusions that astonished her exceedingly. He must, she thought, be the most learned man on earth, and she felt the greatest respect for his knowledge. And when she danced with him again, she fell in



BEING A KING'S DAUGHTER, SHE WAS NOT OBLIGED TO STAND UPON CEREMONY.

love with him—a fact which the shadow was not behind-hand in perceiving, for her eyes nearly looked him through. She danced with him a third time, and was on the point of telling him what she felt, but, being prudent, she thought of her country and her kingdom, and of the many people over whom she would one day reign. "He is a clever man," said she to herself, "and that is all well and good; and he dances admirably, which is well and good likewise—but query, has he any solid knowledge? That is an important consideration, and I must put him to the test."



ON ALL OF WHICH TOPICS THE LEARNED MAN ANSWERED WITH SENSE AND JUDGMENT.

And so she immediately asked him a most knotty question, which she herself would not have been able to resolve, when the shadow made a very odd face.

"You will not be able to answer that," said the king's daughter.

"I should have been able to have done so in my childhood," said the shadow, "and I fancy that even my shadow, who is standing there near the door, would be able to answer your question."

"Your shadow?" said the king's daughter; "that would be remarkable indeed."

"I do not positively say that he can," observed the shadow, "but I should think so. He has followed me so many years, and has heard so much from me, that I should believe he could. But your royal highness must allow me to observe that he is so proud of being taken for a human being, that if one wants him to be in a good humour—and that he need be, in order to answer properly—he must be treated like a real man."

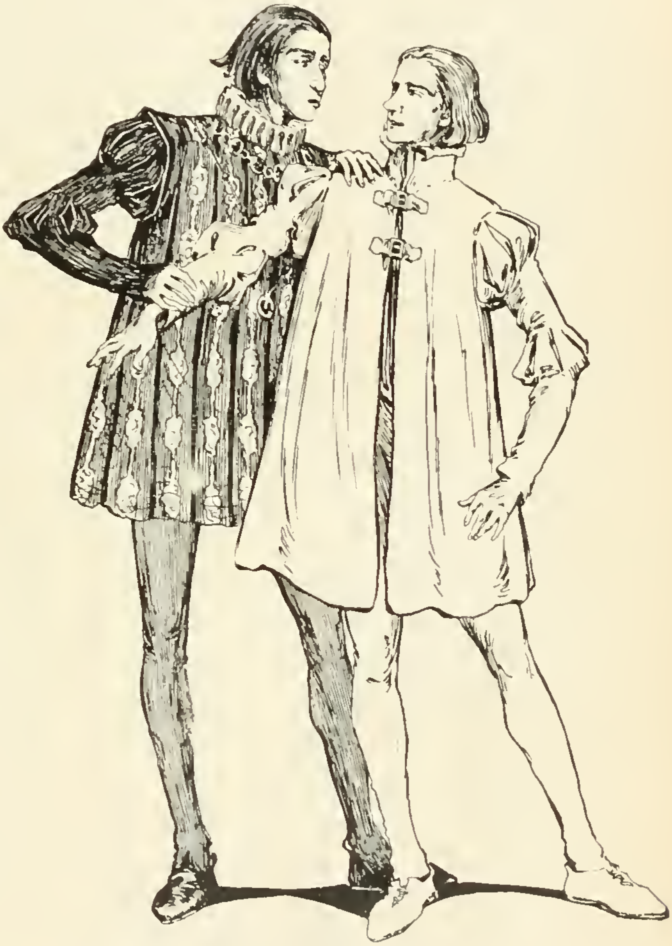
"I like his spirit," said the king's daughter; and going up to the learned man, who stood near the door, she talked with him about the sun and the moon, the green forests, the inhabitants of the earth, both far and near, on all of which topics the learned man answered with sense and judgment.

"What a man must he be who can have so wise and learned a shadow!" thought she. "It would be a blessing for my people and my nation if I chose such a one—so choose him I will."

And the king's daughter and the shadow were soon agreed, but she wished nobody to be informed of their engagement until she had returned to her kingdom.

"Not a soul shall hear of it—not even my shadow!" said the shadow, and he had particular reasons for saying so.

They now reached the land where the king's daughter reigned when she was at home.



"I WILL GO STRAIGHT TO THE KING'S DAUGHTER," SAID THE LEARNED MAN.

"I say, friend," quoth the shadow to the learned man, "now that I am as happy and as influential as anybody can be, I will do something out of the usual way for you. You shall live with me in the palace, and shall drive out with me in the royal carriage, and receive a yearly salary of a hundred thousand rix-dollars; only you must let yourself be styled a shadow before everybody, and must never betray that you ever were a man; and once a year, when I sit in the balcony in the sunshine, and show myself, you must crouch at my feet as becomes a shadow. For I may now inform you that I am about to marry the king's daughter, and that our wedding will take place this evening."

"No; this is carrying absurdity rather too far," said the learned man. "I cannot and will not submit to it. Why, it would be nothing less than deceiving the whole nation, and the king's daughter into the bargain. I shall reveal the whole truth, and say that I am a man and that you are a shadow, only dressed up in man's clothes."

"Not a soul would believe you," said the shadow. "Be reasonable, or I shall summon the guard."

"I will go straight to the king's daughter," said the learned man.

"But I shall go first," said the shadow, "and you, my fine fellow, shall go into prison." And this was no sooner said than done, for the guards obeyed him whom they knew the king's daughter was about to marry.

"You seem to be trembling," said the king's daughter, when the shadow entered her room. "Has anything happened? You must not be ill to-day, just when we are going to celebrate our wedding."

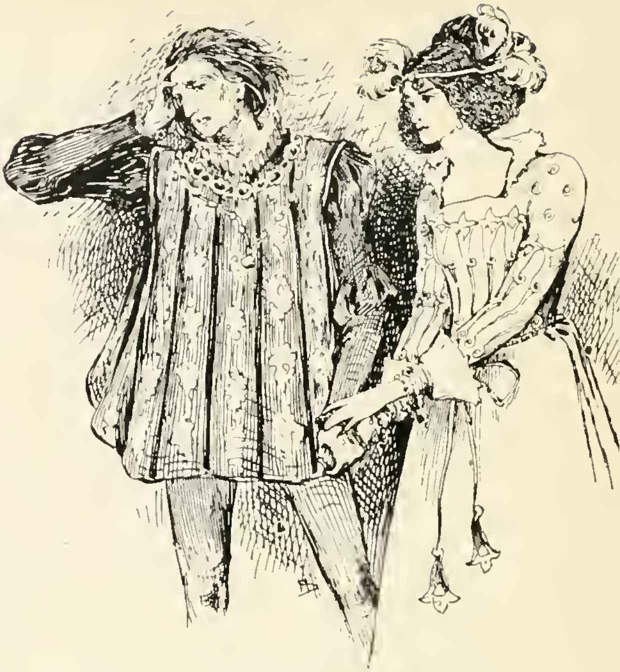
"I have gone through the most dreadful scene that can be imagined," said the shadow. "Only think!—I suppose a shadow's poor brain cannot endure much—only think! my shadow is gone mad; he fancies that he has become a man, and that I—only think!—that I am his shadow!"

"This is shocking," said the princess; "but has he been shut up?"

"Of course; and I am sadly afraid he will never recover."

"Poor shadow!" said the princess; "he is most unfortunate. It would really be a charity to deliver him from his little bit of an existence; and when I come to think how apt the people are in our days to take part with little folks against great folks, it seems to me it would be a politic measure to get rid of him quietly."

"It is a hard case, for he was a faithful servant," said the shadow, pretending to sigh.



"IT IS A HARD CASE, FOR HE WAS A FAITHFUL SERVANT," SAID THE SHADOW, PRETENDING TO SIGH.

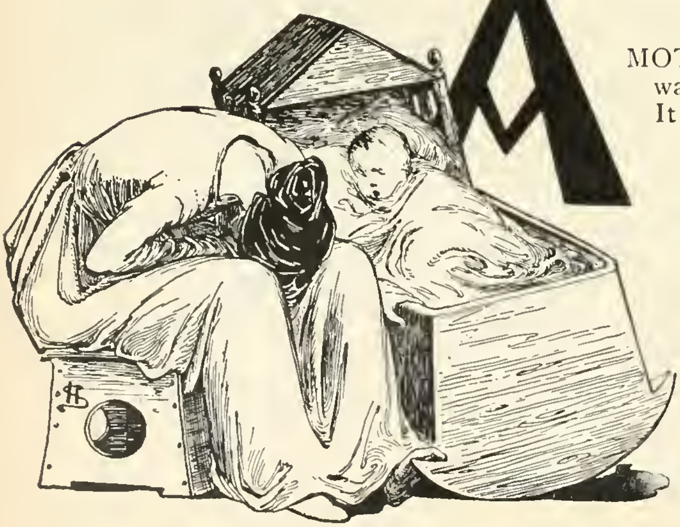
"You are a noble character!" said the princess, bowing to him.

In the evening the whole town was illuminated, and cannons were fired—boom!—and soldiers presented arms. It was a very grand wedding. The king's daughter and the shadow stepped into the balcony to show themselves to the people, and to obtain one cheer more.

But the learned man heard nothing of all these festivities, for he had already been executed.

* * *

The Story of a Mother



A MOTHER sat watching her little child, and she was sadly afflicted, for she feared it would die. It was quite pale, and its little eyes were closed. The child sometimes breathed as heavily as if it drew a deep sigh, and then the mother would gaze on the little being with still greater anguish.

Some one knocked at the door, and in came an old man, wrapped up in what looked like a horse-cloth, for that keeps one warm; and he stood in need of such covering, for it was a cold winter's day. Abroad everything lay covered with snow and ice, and the wind was so sharp that it cut one's face.

Seeing the old man shiver with cold, and as the little child had gone to sleep for a moment, the mother got up and placed a small pot of beer on the stove, to warm it for him. And the old man sat and rocked the cradle, while the mother sat on a chair beside him, and looked at her sick child, who was breathing so heavily, and took hold of its little hand.

"You think that I shall preserve him, do you not?" asked she. "An all-merciful God will surely not take him from me."

The old man—who was no other than Death—nodded his head so oddly, that it might just as well have stood for yes as no. And the mother cast down her eyes, while tears rolled down her cheeks. Her head felt so heavy, for she had never closed her eyes for three days and three nights, that she now fell asleep, but only for a minute, and then she got up and shivered with cold. "How is this?" asked she, looking all about her. But the old man was gone, and her little child was gone; he had evidently taken it with him. And the old clock in the corner began to rattle—the heavy leaden weights fell to the ground:—whirr! and the clock stood still.

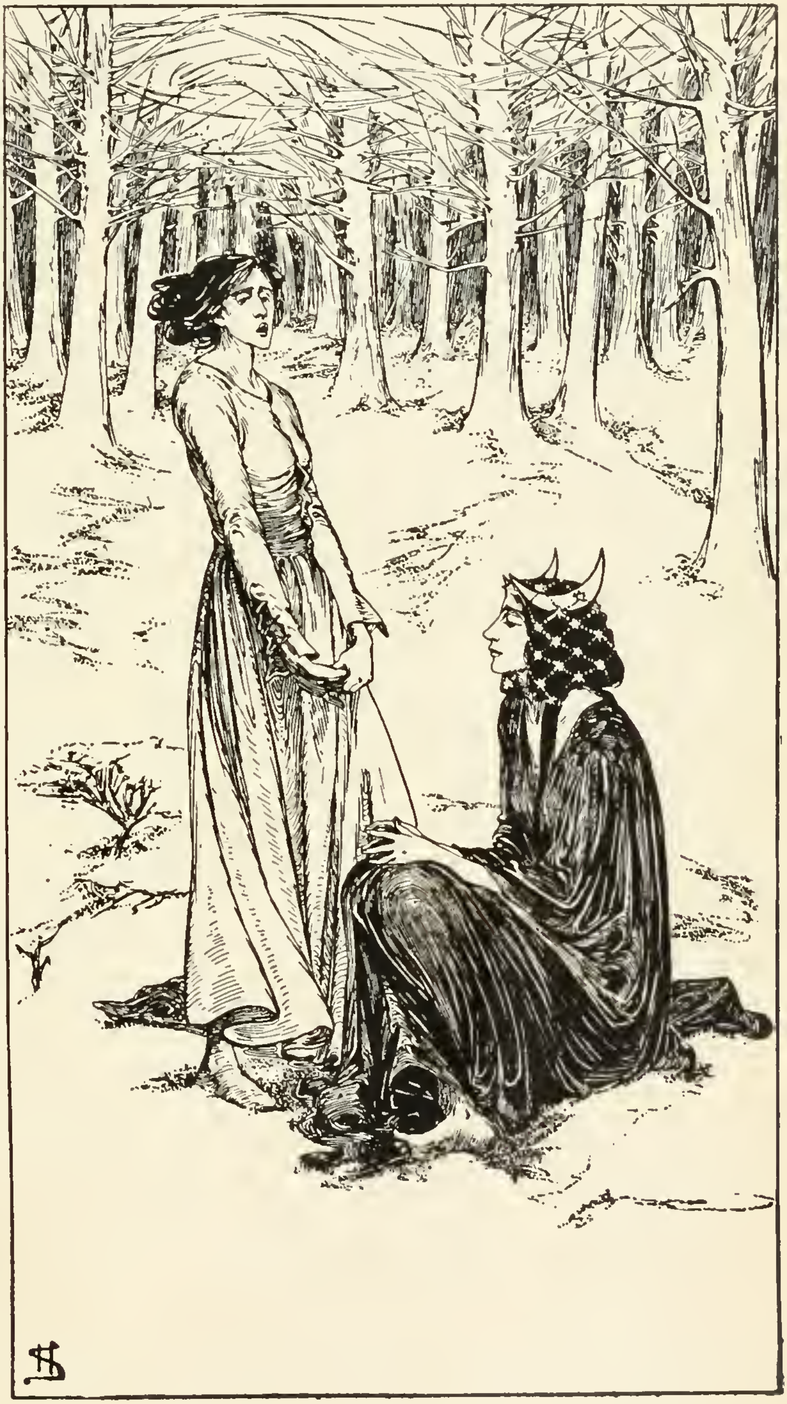
But the poor mother rushed out of the house, calling after her child.

Outside in the snow sat a woman in long black clothes, who said: "Death has been into your room. I saw him hastening away with your little child. He strode faster than the wind: and he never brings back what he has taken."

"Only tell me which way he is gone," said the mother,—"tell me the way, and I'll find him."

"I know it," said the woman in black; "but before I tell you, you must first sing me all the songs you used to sing your child. I am fond of those songs. I have heard them before. I am Night; and I saw your tears flowing while you sang them."

'I will sing them all—all," said the mother; "but don't detain me now, that I may overtake him, and get back my child."



THE MOTHER THEN WRUNG HER HANDS, WEPT, AND SANG.

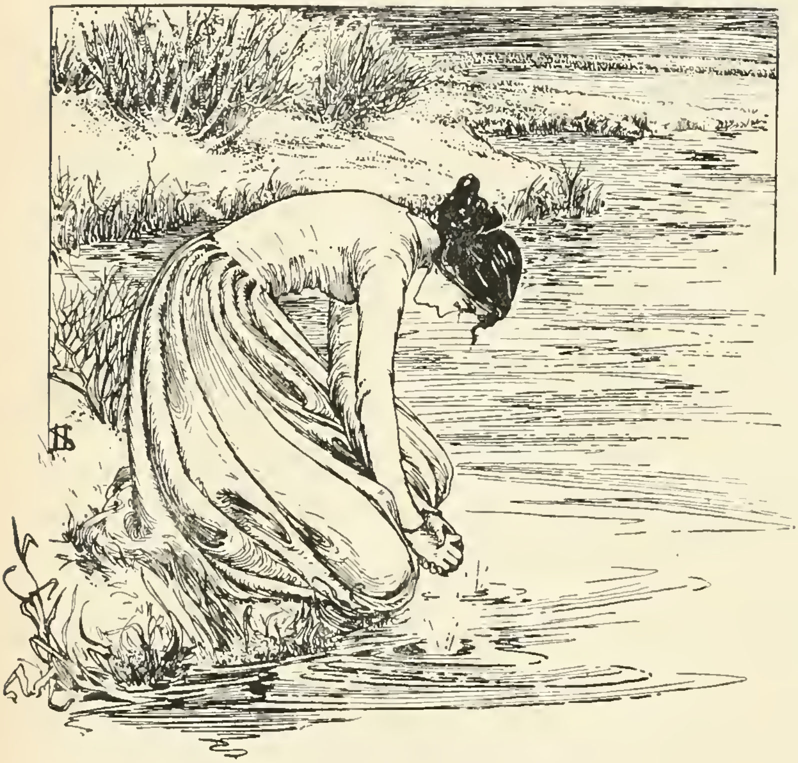
But Night sat silent and still. The mother then wrung her hands, wept, and sang. There were many songs sung, but still more tears were shed. Then Night said: "Go to the right, in the gloomy forest of pines, it was thither I saw Death carrying the little child."

In the depths of the wood was a cross way, and she knew not which direction to take. There stood a bramble-bush, without either leaves or flowers, for it was cold winter, and icicles hung to the twigs.

"Have you not seen Death go past with my little child?"

"Yes," said the bramble-bush; "but I will not tell you which way he has taken, until you have warmed me on your bosom. I am freezing here to death, and turning to ice."

And she pressed the bramble-bush close to her breast, in order that it might thaw. And the thorns ran into her flesh, and her blood trickled down in large drops. But the bramble-bush put forth green leaves, and blossomed in the cold winter's night—for warm, indeed, is the heart of an afflicted mother! And the bramble-bush told her the way she was to go.



AND SHE WEPT AND WEPT TILL HER EYES DISSOLVED INTO THE LAKE, AND BECAME TWO COSTLY PEARLS.

She then reached a large lake, where there was neither a ship nor a boat to be seen. The lake was not sufficiently frozen to bear her on its surface, nor yet shallow enough to be waded through—yet over it must she go to find her child. She then lay down to drink up the lake; but that was an impossible task for any mortal to perform. Nevertheless, the sorrowing mother thought that a miracle might perhaps take place.

"No, that will never do," said the lake; let us two rather agree upon a bargain. I love to collect pearls, and your eyes are the purest pearls I have ever seen. If you will cry them away, then will I take you to yonder large hot-house, where Death lives, and rears trees and flowers, every one of which is a mortal's life."

"What would I not give to find my child?" said the weeping mother. And she wept and wept till her eyes dissolved into the lake, and became two costly pearls. Then the lake raised her up as if she sat on a see-saw, and swung her over to the opposite shore, where stood a strange house a mile long. There was no saying whether it was a mountain covered with forests and caverns, or whether it was timbered. But the poor mother could not see, for she had cried her eyes away.

"Where shall I find Death, who took away my little child?" asked she.

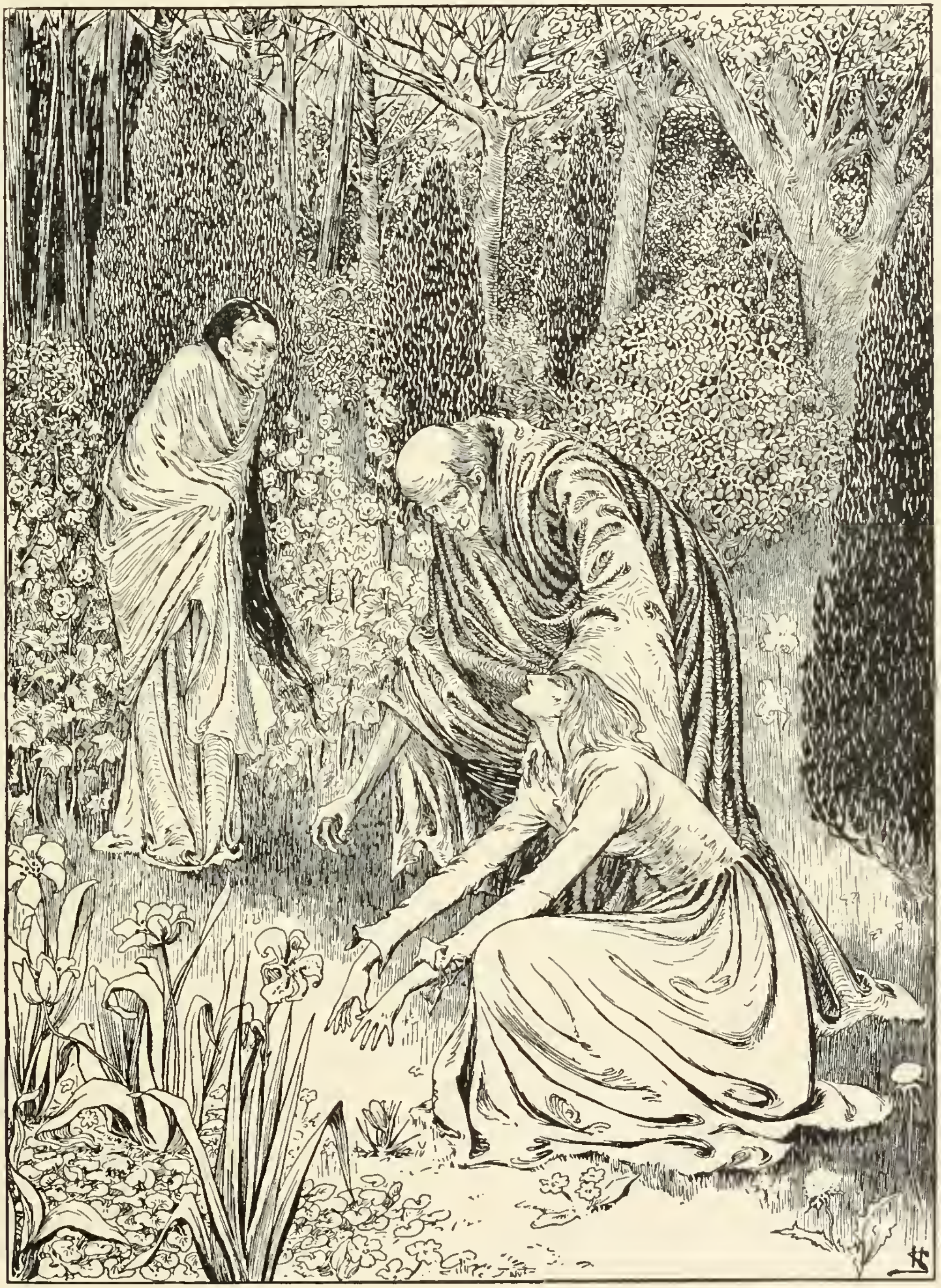
"He has not yet arrived here," said a grey old woman, who took care of Death's hot-house. "How have you come hither, and who has helped you?"

"God has helped me," answered she. "He is compassionate; and do you be the same. Where shall I find my little child?"

"I do not know it," said the old woman, "and you can't see. Many flowers and trees withered to-night, and Death will soon come and transplant them. You know that every human being has his tree of life, or his flower of life, according as the case may be. They look like other plants, but their hearts beat. Children's hearts beat likewise. Therefore be guided by that, and perhaps you may recognise the beatings of your child's heart. But what will you give me if I tell you what more you must do?"

"I have nothing to give," said the afflicted mother; "but I would go to the world's end for you."

"I have no business there," said the old woman; "but you can give me your long black hair. You know yourself that it is beautiful, and it pleases me. You can take my white locks in exchange, and that would be something."



AND DEATH STRETCHED OUT HIS HAND TOWARDS THE LITTLE DELICATE FLOWER.

"Is that all you ask?" said she. "I will give it you with pleasure." And she gave her fine hair in exchange for the old woman's snow-white locks.

And they went into Death's large hot-house, where trees and flowers were growing promiscuously in a strange fashion. There were delicate hyacinths, under glass shades; and large peonies, as strong as trees. There were water-plants; some quite fresh, others half sickly from being entwined in the coils of water-snakes, while black crabs were hugging their stems. Then there were splendid palm-trees, oak, and plane-trees, besides parsley and thyme. Each tree and each flower had its name, and to each was attached the life of some human being, who might be living in China, in Greenland, or in any other part of the world, as it might happen. Some large trees were planted in little pots, so that they were stifled, and ready to shiver the pots to atoms; while many little weakly flowers were set in a rich soil, surrounded with moss, and nurtured with the utmost care. But the afflicted mother bent over the smallest plants, and could hear in each the beatings of a human heart; and she recognised the beatings of her child's heart amongst a million.

"There he is," cried she, stretching out her hand towards a little crocus, that drooped its sickly head on one side.

"Do not touch the flower," said the old woman. "But place yourself here, and when Death comes—and I expect him every minute—don't let him root up the plant, but threaten him to serve other flowers the same, and then he'll be uneasy! He must account for each to God, and none must be uprooted till leave be given him to do so."

A cold wind blew through the hot-house, and the blind mother felt it must be Death who had just arrived.

"How did you find your way hither?" asked he. "How could you come faster than I did?"

"I am a mother!" answered she.

And Death stretched out his hand towards the little delicate flower; but she held her hands fast around it, and clung to it so anxiously, yet so carefully withal, that not one of its leaves were injured. Then Death breathed on her hands, and she felt his breath to be colder than the biting wind, and her hands relaxed their hold.

"You cannot prevail against me," said Death.

"But a merciful God may," said she.

"I only obey His will," said Death. "I am His gardener. I take all His flowers and trees, and transplant them into the vast garden of paradise, in an unknown land. How they flourish there, and what that garden is like, I may not say."

"Give me back my child," said the mother, with tears and entreaties. And she seized hold of two pretty flowers, and said to Death: "I will tear up all your flowers, for I am in despair!"

"Do not touch them," said Death. "You say you are unhappy; and would you make another mother just as unhappy as yourself?"

"Another mother!" cried the poor woman, leaving hold of the flowers.

"There are your eyes," said Death. "I have fished them up out of the lake. They were so bright, that I knew they were yours. Take them back—they are now more brilliant than before—and then look into the deep well just by. I will speak the names of the two flowers that you wished to root up, when their whole future career shall lie displayed before you. And then you will see what you wanted to ruin and destroy in the bud."

And she then looked down into the well; and it was delightful to see how the existence of one of these flowers was a blessing to the world, and how much happiness it spread around; while the life of the other was full of care, anxiety, misery, and wretchedness.

"Both are the will of God," said Death.

"Which is the unhappy flower, and which is the blessed one?" said she.

"I may not tell you," answered Death: "but this much shall you learn from me: that one of these flowers was attached to your child's existence. It was the future fate that awaited your child that you beheld!"

The mother then uttered a scream of alarm.

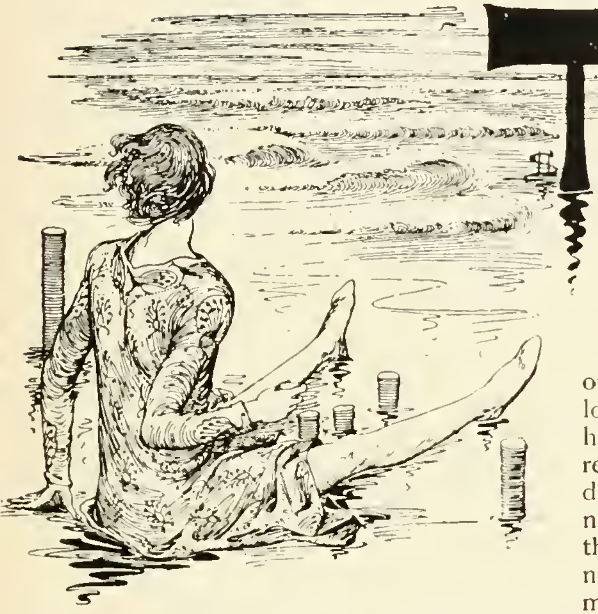
"Which of them was my child's fate? Tell me. Deliver the innocent one! Deliver my child from so much misery! Rather take it away! Take it to the kingdom of God! Forget my tears and my entreaties, and all that I have done!"

"I do not understand you," said Death. "Do you wish to have your child back again, or shall I take him to that place which you do not know?"

The mother then wrung her hands, fell on her knees, and prayed to God: "Grant not my prayers when they are contrary to Thy will, which must always be the best! Oh! grant them not!" And her head drooped upon her bosom.

And Death carried her child to the unknown land.

The Flying Trunk



THERE was once a merchant who was so rich that he could have paved the whole street, and perhaps a little alley besides with silver, only he did not do it, because he knew how to turn his money to better account. If he put out a shilling, he got a dollar in return; and a very knowing merchant was he—until he died.

His son now inherited all his money, and led a merry life, went to masquerades every night, made kites out of bonds, and threw pieces of gold, instead of stones, into the sea, when he wanted to make ducks and drakes. This was one way of getting rid of his money, and it was not long before he had spent all his fortune. At last he had nothing left but four shillings, and no clothes remaining, except a pair of slippers and an old dressing-gown. His friends now took no further notice of him, as they could no longer walk about the streets with him; but one of them was good-natured enough to send him an old trunk, with this message: "Pack up." This was all very well, only he *had* nothing to pack up; therefore he put himself into the trunk

It was a very wonderful trunk. The moment the lid was shut, the trunk was able to fly. He shut it down—and, Heigh, presto! away it flew up the chimney, and above the clouds, further and further still. As often as the bottom of the trunk creaked a little, he was very uneasy lest it should fall to pieces, for then he would have cut a tremendous somersault—would he not? In this manner he reached Turkey. Having concealed his trunk under some dried leaves in a wood, he entered a neighbouring town. And this he was able to do, for all Turks go about in the same trim as himself—namely, in a dressing-gown and slippers. He happened to meet a nurse carrying a little child. "I say, you Turkish nurse," cried he, "what is that large castle near the town, where the windows are placed so high?"

"The king's daughter lives there," replied she. "It has been foretold that she would be very unhappy about a lover, so nobody is allowed to see her except in the presence of the king and queen."

"Thank you," said the merchant's son; and he returned to the wood, placed himself in his trunk, flew on to the roof, and crept in to the princess through the window.

She lay asleep on the sofa, and looked so beautiful that the merchant's son could not help kissing her. She then awoke, and was very much frightened; but he told her he was a Turkish god, who had come down through the air to see her, and that pleased her very much.

They sat side by side, and he told her stories about her eyes; they were beautiful dark lakes, he said, and thoughts swam in their waters like so many little mermaids. Then he talked of her forehead, which he compared to a mountain of snow which contained the most beautiful halls filled with pictures. And then he told her about the stork, who brings such lovely little children.

What pretty stories those were! Then he wooed the princess, and she accepted his suit at once.

"But you must come on Saturday," said she, "for then the king and queen will be taking tea with me. They will be very proud of my obtaining a Turkish god for my husband. Only mind you think of some pretty story to tell them, for my parents are very fond of such. My mother likes a story to be moral and genteel, and my father prefers something funny, that makes one laugh."

"I shall bring no other marriage gift than a story," said he, and then they parted. But the princess gave him a sword that was set with gold coins, and this he could make use of.

So he now flew away, and bought a new dressing-gown, and sat in the wood and composed a story, for it was to be ready by Saturday, and that was no easy matter.

It was, however, ready for Saturday.

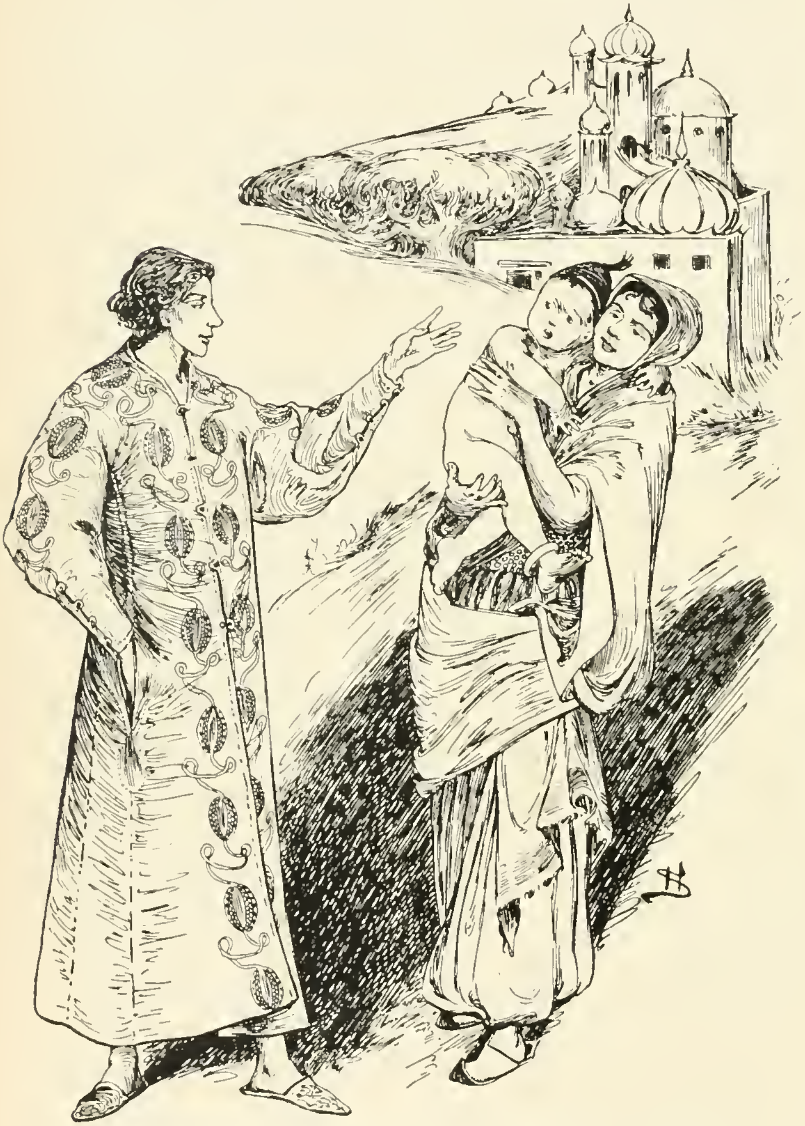
The king and queen and the whole court were at tea with the princess, and he was received very politely.

"Will you tell us a story?" asked the queen; "one that is instructive and full of meaning?"

"Yet laughable withal," said the king.

"Certainly," replied he; and then he began to relate the following story, that deserves to be listened to attentively:—

"There was once a bundle of matches that were exceedingly proud of their descent. Their genealogical tree—namely, the large pine of which each was a small fragment—was a stately and aged tree in a forest. The matches now lay between a tinder-box and an iron saucepan, and talked about the days of their youth. 'Yes,' said they, 'when we were still on the green boughs, we were really in our palmy days! Every morning and evening we had diamond tea — that was the dew; and we had sunshine all day, when the sun happened to shine, and all the little birds were obliged to tell stories. We could perceive that we were rich, for while the trees that have leaves were only dressed in summer, our family had the means to wear green clothes both summer and winter. At last the woodcutter came, and that was the great revolution that overturned our family. The head of our house obtained the situation of main-mast in a very fine ship that might have sailed round the world as easily as not, the other branches of the family were taken to different places, and we now fulfil the office of giving light to the vulgar herd. That is how persons of our rank come to be here in the kitchen.'


"I SAY, YOU TURKISH NURSE," CRIED HE, "WHAT IS THAT LARGE CASTLE NEAR THE TOWN, WHERE THE WINDOWS ARE PLACED SO HIGH?"

"'My fate has been widely different,' said the iron saucepan, that stood near the matches. 'Ever since I have been in the world, I have been scoured and put on the fire times out of mind. I am for the solid department, and am the most important implement in the house. My only pleasure consists in being made clean and shining after dinner, and then lying quietly in my place and having a little rational talk with my neighbours. Yet, with the exception of the bucket that is carried to and fro from the yard, we live entirely within these four walls. Our only newsman is the market-basket, who tells us such alarming things about the Government and the people that recently an old pot fell down through sheer fright, and was broken to shivers. The basket belongs to the Liberal party, I can tell you.'

"'You speak a great deal too much,' said the tinder-box, while the steel struck the flint till it emitted sparks. 'Shall we contrive how we can spend a pleasant evening?'

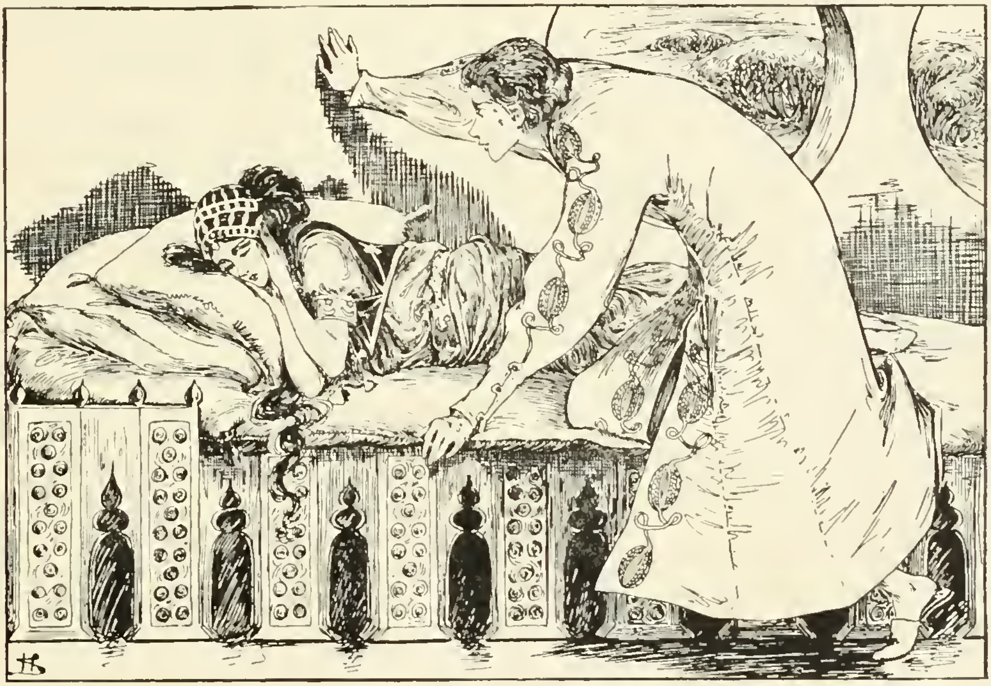
"'Yes; let us discuss who is the most nobly born amongst us,' said the matches.

"'No; I do not like speaking of myself," objected the saucepan. 'Let us think of some evening's amusement. I will begin. We will tell each other the adventures we have met with; that will be easy to do, and very entertaining. On the shores of the Baltic, near the Danish beeches—— '

"'What a pretty beginning!' said the plates; 'this will surely be a story that will please us.'

"'Yes—I spent my youth in a quiet family. The furniture was rubbed with wax, the floor was scoured and clean curtains were put up every fortnight.'

"'How very interesting you make your story!' observed the broom; 'one can perceive at once that it is told by a man who has enjoyed the advantages of female society. There is something so elegant about it!'



SHE LAY ASLEEP ON THE SOFA, AND LOOKED SO BEAUTIFUL THAT THE MERCHANT'S SON COULD NOT HELP KISSING HER.

"'That is quite true,' said the bucket, giving a little leap for joy, and splashing the floor.

"And the saucepan went on with the narrative, and the end was worthy of the beginning.

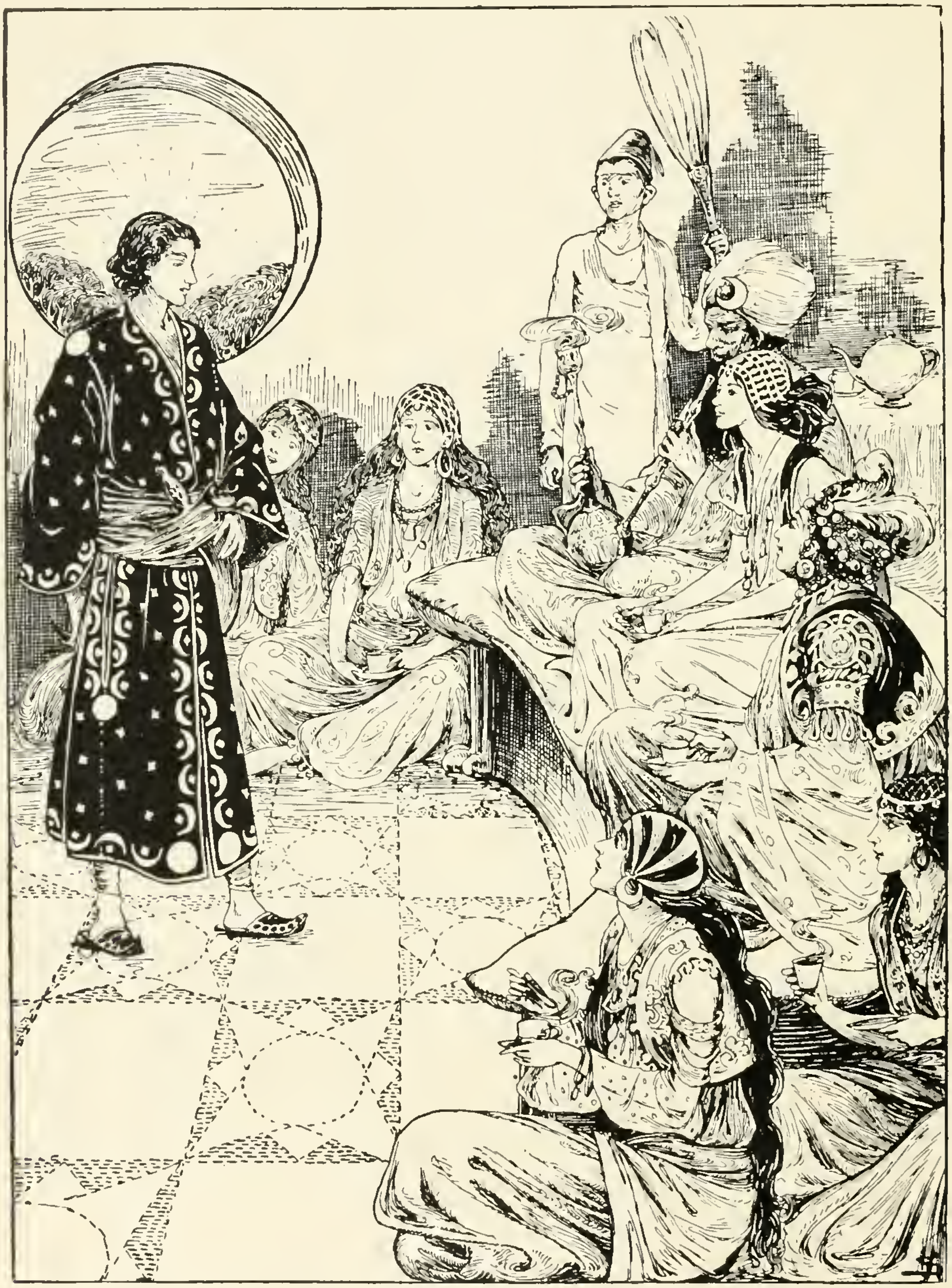
"The plates rattled with delight, and the broom took up some green parsley and crowned the saucepan, for he knew it would vex the others. 'If I crown him to-day,' thought he, 'he will crown me to-morrow.'

"'Now I will dance,' said the fire-tongs, and began dancing. Bless us, how she did foot it! The old chair-cover in the corner burst at the sight. 'Shall I be crowned now?' asked the fire-tongs; and she accordingly obtained a wreath.

"'These are only common people,' thought the matches.

"The urn was now asked to sing, but declared she had a cold, and could not sing unless she boiled. But these were only airs—she would not sing unless she were on the table in the drawing-room, with the master and mistress of the house.

"In the window was stuck an old goose-quill, which the maid used for writing. There was nothing remarkable about her, except that she had been dipped rather too deep in the ink. But she was proud of this. 'Since the urn won't sing,' said she, 'she may let it alone. There is a nightingale in a cage outside, and she can sing. She never learned anything, but we will overlook that for this evening.'



THE KING AND QUEEN AND THE WHOLE COURT WERE AT TEA WITH THE PRINCESS, AND HE WAS RECEIVED VERY POLITELY.

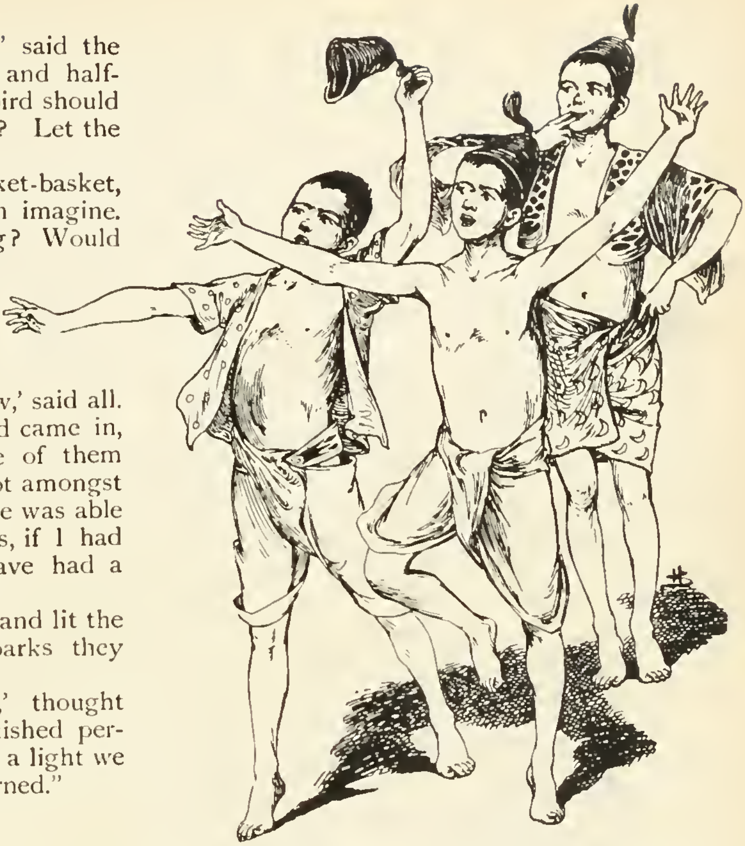
"'I consider it highly improper,' said the tea-kettle—he was a kitchen singer, and half-brother to the urn—'that this foreign bird should be heard. Do you call that patriotism? Let the market-basket decide the question.'

"'I am vexed,' said the market-basket, 'more heartily vexed than any one can imagine. Is this a fit way of spending the evening? Would it not be much more sensible to set the house to rights? Every one should take his place, and I would lead the whole game. That would be something far better.'

"'Yes; let us make a good show,' said all. The door was then opened. The maid came in, and they stood stock still—not one of them stirred! Yet there was not a single pot amongst them who was not conscious of what he was able to do, and of his high quality. 'Yes, if I had chosen,' thought each, 'we might have had a very pleasant evening.'

"The maid took up the matches and lit the fire with them.—Bless us! what sparks they threw out, and how they did burn!

"'Everybody can now perceive,' thought they, 'that we are the most distinguished persons present. How we shine! What a light we shed!' And so saying, they were burned."



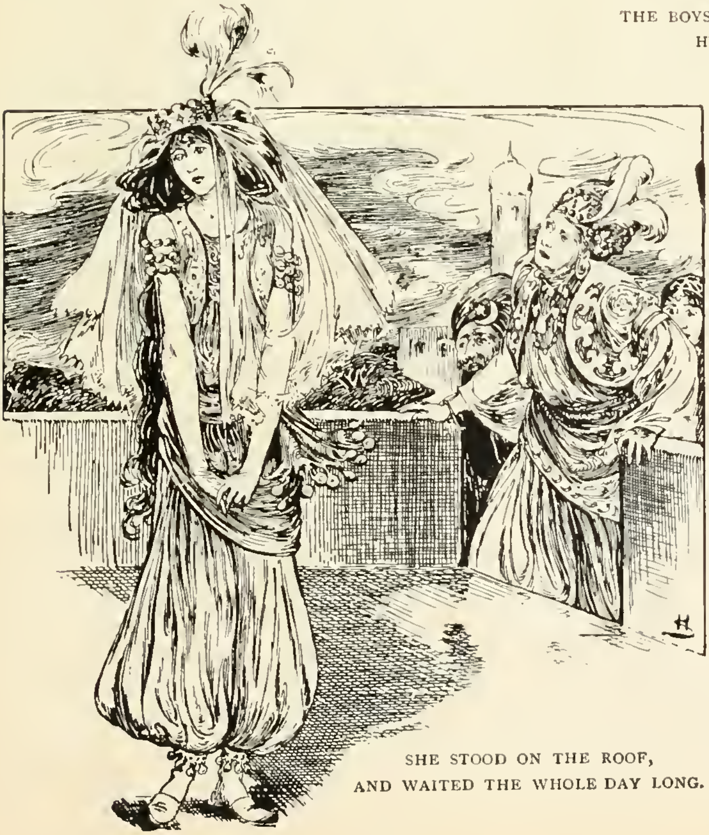
THE BOYS IN THE STREETS STOOD ON TIPTOE, CRIED HURRAH! AND WHISTLED THROUGH THEIR FINGERS.

"That is a charming story!" said the queen; "I felt myself so completely transported into the kitchen, amongst the matches! Yes, you shall obtain our daughter's hand."

"Yes," said the king, "you shall have our daughter on Monday." And then they treated him as familiarly as though he had already belonged to the family.

The wedding-day was now fixed, and on the night before the whole town was illuminated. Pastry and cracknels were distributed to the mob; the boys in the streets stood on tip-toe, cried Hurrah! and whistled through their fingers. It was a magnificent sight to behold!

"I must now treat them to something," thought the merchant's son. So he purchased rockets, crackers, and all sorts of fireworks, which he packed into his trunk, and then flew up into the air with them.



SHE STOOD ON THE ROOF, AND WAITED THE WHOLE DAY LONG.

What a whizzing and what a whirring they made as they went off!

The Turks capered about with delight, till their slippers flew about their ears; they had never before seen such a sight in the air. They now understood that the princess was really going to marry a Turkish divinity.

As soon as the merchant's son had come down again into the wood, with his trunk, he thought: "I will go into the town, and learn how the entertainment went off." And it was quite natural he should wish to do so. What things the people did say, to be sure! Every one whom he questioned had seen the show through his own medium, but they all thought it beautiful.

"I saw the Turkish god's own self," said one. "His eyes were like beaming stars, and his beard like foaming water."

"He flew in a fiery mantle," said another; "the loveliest cherubs peeped out from amongst its folds."

Yes, he heard mighty fine things; and the next day he was to be married.

He now returned to the wood to sit in his trunk—but where was it? The trunk was burned. A spark from the fireworks had remained behind, so the trunk had caught fire and had been reduced to ashes. He could not fly any more, nor go to meet his bride.

She stood on the roof, and waited the whole day long, and most likely is waiting there still. Meanwhile, he wanders through the world, and tells stories, but none of them are so amusing as the one he told about the matches.

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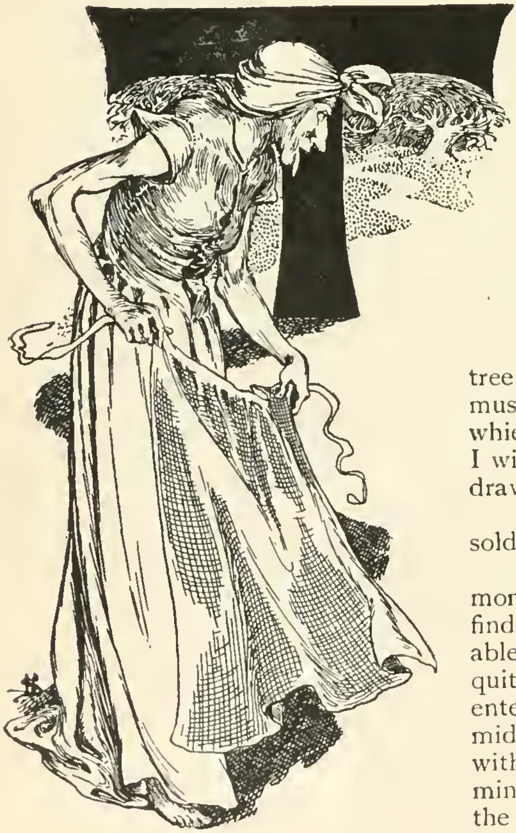
The Tinder-Box



THERE came a soldier marching along on the high road. Left! Right! Left! Right! He had his knapsack on his back, and his sword at his side, for he had been to war, and was returning home.

On his way, he happened to meet a very repulsive-looking old witch, whose under-lip hung down to her chin. She said: "Good-evening, soldier—what a handsome sword, and what a large knapsack you have got! You are a very proper sort of soldier! And you shall have as much money as ever you like."

"Thank you, you old witch," said the soldier.

"You see that large tree?" said the witch, pointing to a tree near at hand. "Well! it is quite hollow inside. You must climb to the top, and then you will see a hole, through which you must let yourself down quite deep into the tree. I will tie a rope round your body, that I may be able to draw you up again when you call out."

"But what am I to do down in the tree?" asked the soldier.

"Get money," said the witch, "for know, that the moment you have reached the bottom of the tree, you will find yourself in a large hall, brilliantly lighted with innumerable lamps. You will then perceive three doors. These are quite easy to open, for in each lock there is a key. As you enter the first chamber, you will see a large chest in the middle of the floor, and on the chest will be sitting a dog with a pair of eyes as big as teacups. But you need not mind him. I will give you my checked apron to spread on the floor; then go right to the dog, seize hold of him, and place him on my apron, open the chest and take as many pennies as you please. They are copper ones. If you prefer silver, you need only go into the next chamber. Only there sits a dog with eyes as big as mill-wheels. But never mind him.

Place him on my apron, and take some money. If, however, you want gold, you can take as much as you can carry away, by going into the third chamber. Only the dog that sits on the money-chest in that room, has eyes as big as a tower. Believe me, he is a bad dog! Yet you need not mind. If you set him on my apron, he won't hurt you, and then take as much gold as you like out of the chest."

"This is no bad job!" said the soldier; "but what shall I give you, you old witch; for, of course, you don't oblige me for nothing?"

"Yet not a single penny of it do I require," said the witch. "The only thing I ask you to bring me is an old tinder-box, which my grandmother forgot last time she went down there."

"Well, then, tie the rope round me," said the soldier.

"Here it is," said the witch, "and here is my checked apron."

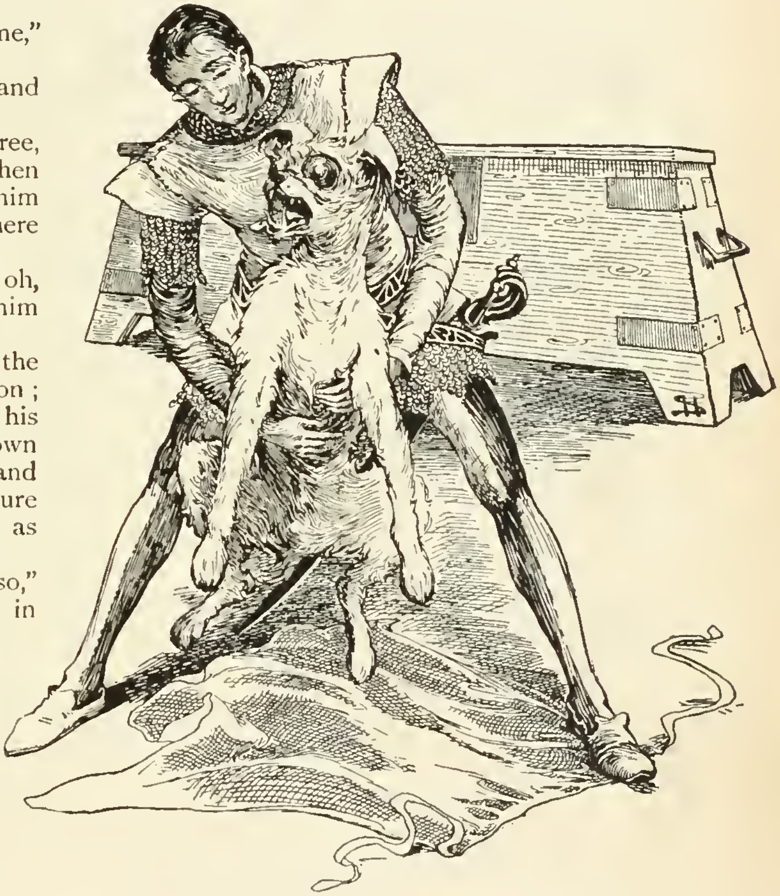
The soldier then climbed up the tree, slid down through the aperture, and then found himself as the witch had told him he would, in a large hall below, where many hundreds of lamps were burning.

He now opened the first door—oh, dear!—there stood the dog staring at him with eyes as big as teacups.

"You are a nice fellow!" said the soldier, setting him on the witch's apron; and then he took as many pennies as his pockets could hold; and shutting down the lid, he replaced the dog upon it, and went into the other room. And, sure enough, there sat the dog with eyes as big as mill-wheels.

"You had better not stare at me so," said the soldier, "or you will have tears in your eyes!" And he then set the dog on the witch's apron. But when he saw what a load of silver there was in the chest, he flung away all the copper he had taken, and filled his pockets and knapsack with nothing but silver. Then he went into the third chamber. Now, that was really hideous! The dog had, positively, a pair of eyes as large as two towers, that kept turning about like wheels.

"Good-evening," said the soldier, touching his cap, for he had never seen such a dog before. On a closer inspection, however, he thought he had made enough ado, and therefore lifted him on to the floor, and opened the chest.



AND HE SET THE DOG ON THE WITCH'S APRON.

Bless us! what a deal of gold was there to be seen! Enough to buy up the whole town, and all the sugar-pigs of all the stall-women, all the lead soldiers, whips, and rocking-horses in the whole world! It was, indeed, a huge sight of gold! The soldier now flung away all the silver with which he had encumbered his pockets and his knapsack, and exchanged it for gold; and he crammed not only all his pockets and his knapsack, but even his cap and his boots so full that he could hardly walk.

"Now draw me up, you old witch!" said he.

"Have you got the tinder-box?" asked the witch.

"Zounds!" said the soldier, "I clean forgot it!" And he went back and fetched it. The witch then drew him up, and he found himself once more on the highway, with his pockets, boots, knapsack, and cap, filled with gold.

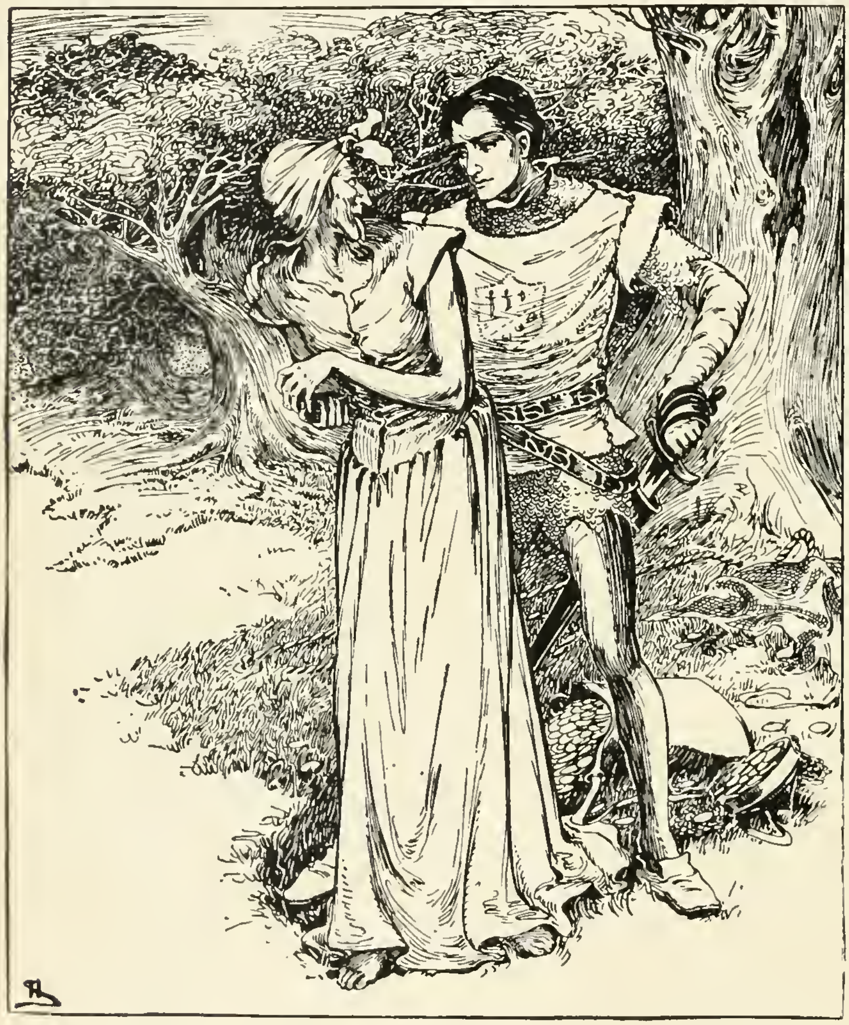
"What are you going to do with the tinder-box?" asked the soldier.

"That's nothing to you," said the witch. "You have got plenty of money—now give me the tinder-box."

"Do you know what?" said the soldier. "You must either tell me at once what you mean to do with it, or I'll draw my sword and cut your head off."

"I won't," said the witch.

The soldier immediately struck her head off—and there she lay! Then he tied up all his money in her apron, and slung it at his back like a bundle, put the tinder-box into his pocket, and walked towards the town.



"DO YOU KNOW WHAT?" SAID THE SOLDIER. "YOU MUST EITHER TELL ME AT ONCE WHAT YOU MEAN TO DO WITH IT, OR I'LL DRAW MY SWORD AND CUT YOUR HEAD OFF."

A very pretty town it was! He turned into the nicest inn he could find, asked for the best room, and ordered his favourite dishes for dinner; for now he was rich, having so much money in his possession.

The servant who cleaned his boots did, to be sure, think them wonderfully shabby boots for such a wealthy gentleman; for he had not yet purchased new ones. On the following day, however, he procured proper boots and handsome clothes. From a mere common soldier he had now become a grand gentleman; and the people told him of all the fine things to be seen in their city, and what a handsome princess the king's daughter was.

"Where can she be seen?" asked the soldier.

"She is not to be seen at all," said they. "She lives in a large copper castle, flanked with towers, and surrounded by walls. Nobody but the king is allowed to go in or out; for it has been foretold that she will marry a common soldier, and the king can't endure such an idea."

"I should like to see her, however," said the soldier. But he could not by any means obtain leave to do so.

He now led a very pleasant life. He visited the theatres, drove in the king's park, and gave abundant alms to the poor; and that was good of him, because he remembered, by his early days, how sad it is not to possess a penny in the world. He was now rich, and had fine clothes, and plenty of friends, who all declared that he was an excellent fellow, and a real gentleman; and the soldier was nothing loth to hear this said. As, however, he kept daily giving away money, and never receiving any, he at last had nothing but two pennies left, and he was obliged to give up the elegant rooms he had inhabited, and to take a little garret, where he had to clean his own boots, and even to mend them with a darning-needle. None of his friends came to see him, now there were so many stairs to go up.

One dark evening, he had not enough money to buy a light; but he happened to recollect that there was a candle-end in the tinder-box which he had fetched out of the tree, into which the witch had helped him to slide down. So he looked for the tinder-box and the candle-end; but no sooner had he struck a few sparks from the flint, than the door flew open, and the dog, whose eyes were as big as teacups, whom he had seen down in the tree, stood before him, saying: "What orders, master?"

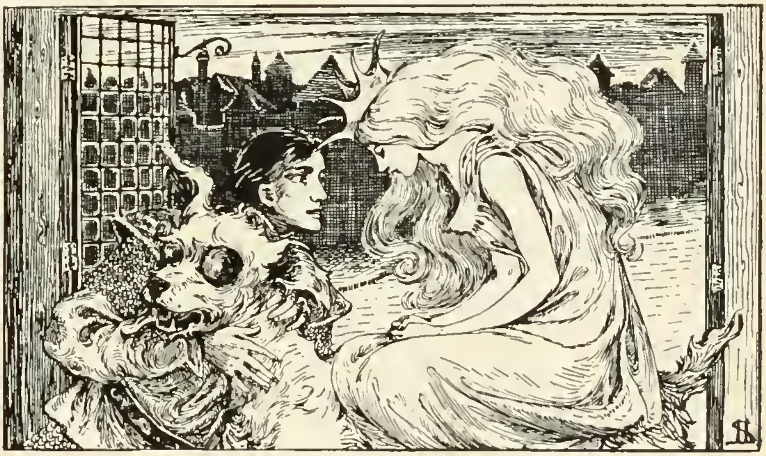
"How is this?" asked the soldier. "Well, it's a pleasant tinder-box indeed, if it can give me all I wish for. Bring me some money!" added he to the dog.

And away went the dog; and back he came, in a trice, carrying a large bag of copper in his mouth.

The soldier now knew the value of the tinder-box he had in his possession. If he struck the flint once, there appeared the dog that sat on the lid of the copper coins; if he struck it twice, there came the dog belonging to the chest of silver; and if he struck it three times, it brought the dog that watched over the gold. The soldier now returned to the handsome rooms below, and appeared once more in fine clothes. His friends then recognised him immediately, and made a great fuss about him.

He once thought: "It is very strange that one cannot manage to get a sight of this princess. People say she is so very beautiful, but that's not of much use to her if she is obliged to remain shut up in a large copper castle, flanked by turrets. Can't I somehow get a look at her? Where's my tinder-box?" And he struck a light, when lo! there came the dog with eyes as big as teacups.

"Though it is in the middle of the night," said the soldier, "yet I have a great mind to see the princess, if it were only for a moment."



SHE LAY ASLEEP ON THE DOG'S BACK, AND WAS SO LOVELY THAT EVERYBODY MIGHT SEE SHE WAS A REAL PRINCESS.

The dog was gone in a jiffy, and before the soldier could look round, had returned with the princess. She lay asleep on the dog's back, and was so lovely that everybody might see she was a real princess. The soldier could not help kissing her, like a true soldier that he was.

The dog then ran back with the princess. But next morning, when the king and queen were drinking tea, the princess related what an odd dream she had had in the night about a dog and a soldier. She had ridden upon the dog, and been kissed by the soldier

"Really, this is a pretty story," said the queen.

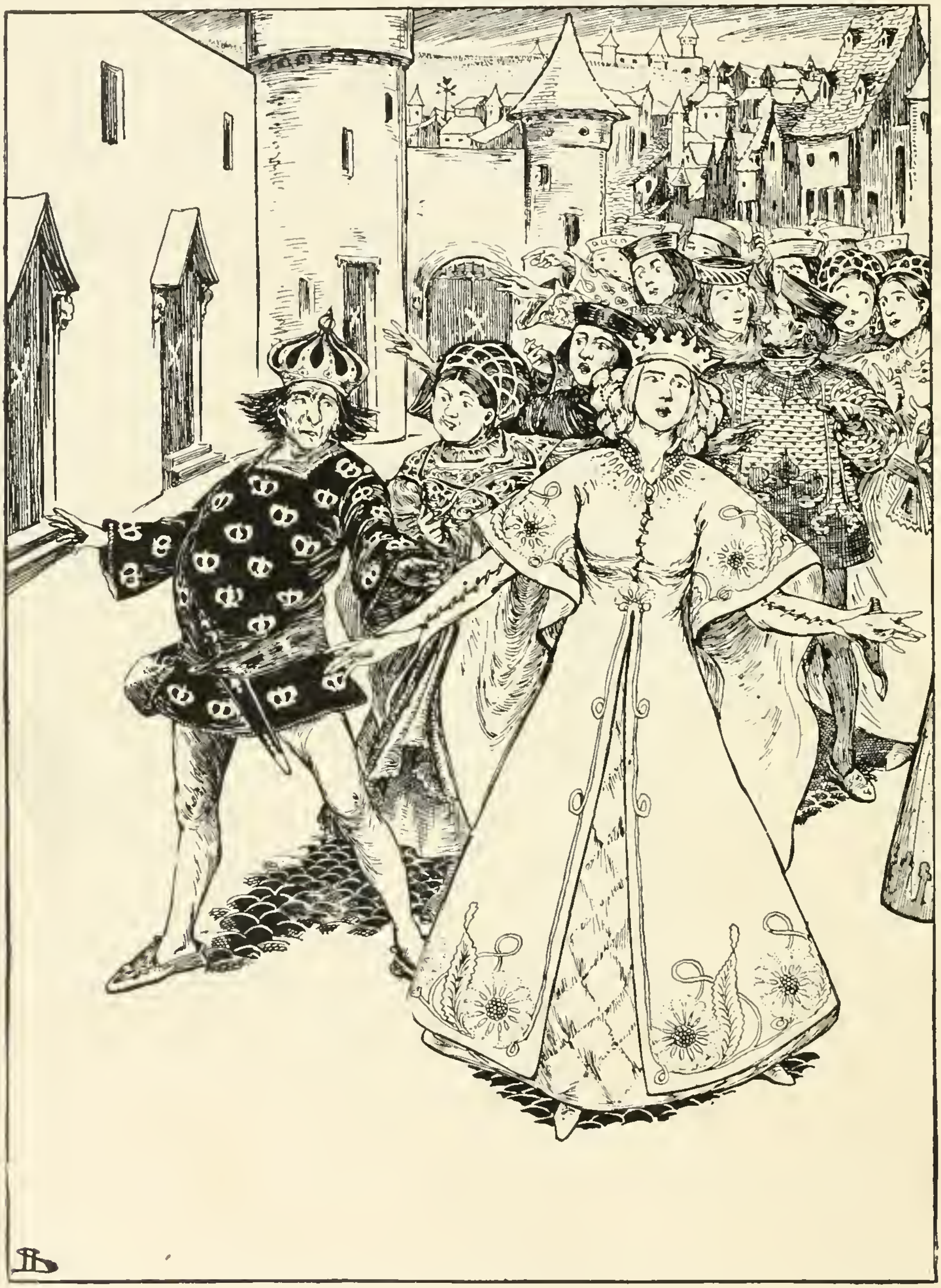
An elderly lady-in-waiting was set to watch that night by the princess's bed. in order to see whether it had been a real dream, or whether there might be any truth in it.

The soldier longed excessively to see the princess once more; so the dog was sent again in the night to fetch her, and ran away as fast as he could. But the old lady-in-waiting put on snow-boots, and ran after him at almost as quick a pace. When she saw that they went into a large house, she thought she should know how to find it again by making a huge cross on the door with a piece of chalk. She then went home, and lay down, and presently the dog returned with the princess; but when he saw the cross on the door of the house where the soldier lived, he took a piece of chalk, and marked every door in the town with a cross, so that the lady-in-waiting should not be able to find the right one.

Early next morning, the king and queen, and the old lady-in-waiting, and all the officers of the household, came to see where the princess had been.

"It must be here," said the king, on perceiving the first door that was marked with a cross.

"No, there, my dear husband," said the queen, seeing the second door similarly marked.



"BUT THERE'S ONE, AND THERE'S ANOTHER," SAID ALL PRESENT; FOR WHICHEVER WAY THEY LOOKED, THERE WERE CROSSES ON ALL THE DOORS.

"But there's one, and there's another," said all present; for whichever way they looked, there were crosses on all the doors. They were then convinced that it was no use seeking any further.

But the queen was a clever woman, who knew something beyond merely riding out in a coach. She took up her large gold scissors, and cut out a piece of silk into small bits, and made a pretty little bag; having filled it with buck-wheat flour, she fastened it to the princess's back, and then cut a small hole in the bag, so that the flour should strew the whole way the princess went.

During the night, the dog came again, and took the princess on his back, and ran with her to the soldier, who had grown so fond of her, that he wished to be a prince, that he might marry her.

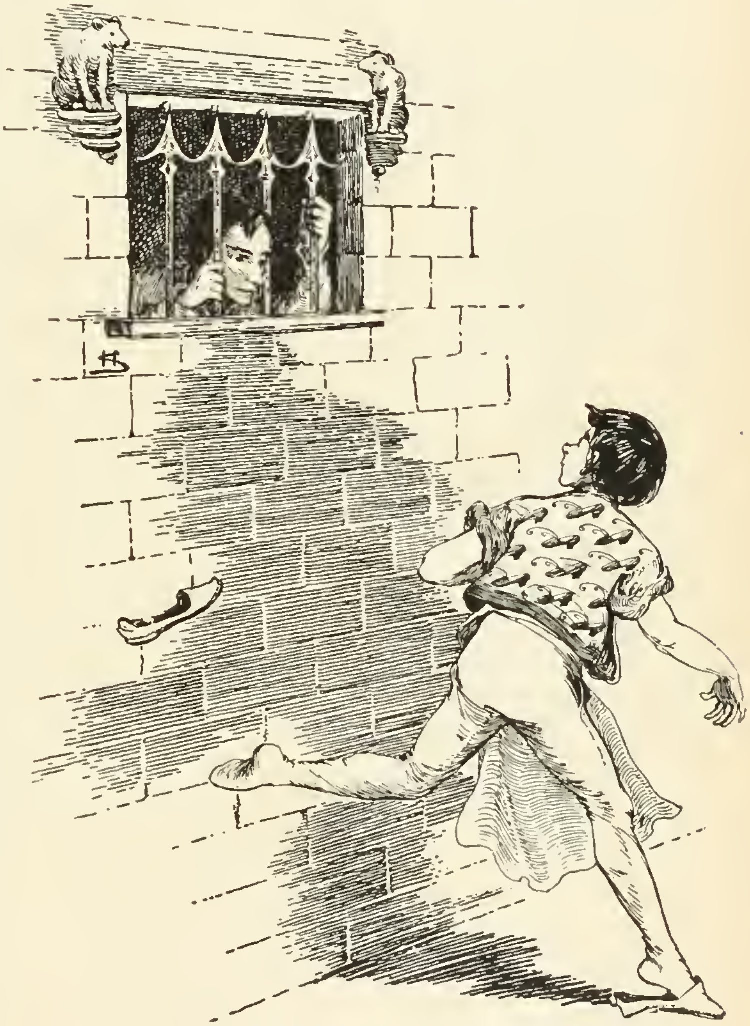
The dog did not remark that the flour had bestrewed the way from the castle to the soldier's very window, as he ran up to the wall with the princess. In the morning, the king and queen found out where their daughter had been, and they had the soldier taken and put into prison.

And there he sat, and dark and dull enough it was! Besides, they said to him: "You shall be hanged to-morrow!" which was not a very pleasant prospect, especially as he had left his tinder-box at the inn. Next morning, he could see, through the gratings of his little window, the crowds that were hastening out of town to see him hung. He heard the drums beating, and saw the soldiers marching. Everybody ran out to look at them, amongst the rest a shoemaker's apprentice, in his leather apron and slippers. He sped away at such a rate, that one of his slippers flew off, and hit the wall just where the soldier sat looking through the iron grating.

"I say, you shoemaker's 'prentice, you needn't be in such a hurry," said the soldier. "The execution can't take place till I am there. But if you have a mind to run and fetch me my tinder-box, you shall have four shillings; only you must go as fast as your legs will carry you." The shoemaker's apprentice liked the notion of earning four shillings, so away he ran, and fetched the tinder-box, and handed it over to the soldier. But we shall see what came to pass.

Outside the town stood a large gibbet, surrounded by walls. Around these stood the soldiers, and several thousands of human beings. The king and queen sat on a magnificent throne, opposite the judges and the whole council.

The soldier stood already on the ladder; but, just as the rope was being put round his neck, he observed that a poor sinner was always granted any innocent wish he might express before he suffered death. Now, he wished to smoke a pipe, as it would be the last pipe he could enjoy in this world.


"I SAY, YOU SHOEMAKER'S 'PRENTICE, YOU NEEDN'T BE IN SUCH A HURRY," SAID THE SOLDIER.

The king could not refuse his request; so the soldier took out his tinder-box, and struck the flint once—twice—and thrice! And there came all the dogs: the one with eyes as big as teacups, the one with eyes like mill-wheels, and the one whose eyes were as large as the towers.

"Help me, so that I may not be hung!" said the soldier.

And the dogs fell upon the judges and the whole council, seized some by the legs, and the others by the nose, and flung them several feet high into the air, so that when they fell down again they were shattered to pieces.

"I order you not," said the king; but the largest dog seized him, as well as the queen, and tossed them up like the others. The soldiers were then frightened, and the whole population cried out: "Good soldier, you shall be our king, and marry the beautiful princess."

They then placed the soldier in the king's carriage, and the three dogs ran before, crying: "Hurrah!" And the little boys played the fife on their fingers, and the soldiers presented arms. The princess left the copper castle, and became a queen, all of which she liked vastly. The wedding entertainment lasted eight days, and the dogs sat at table, and stared with all their might.

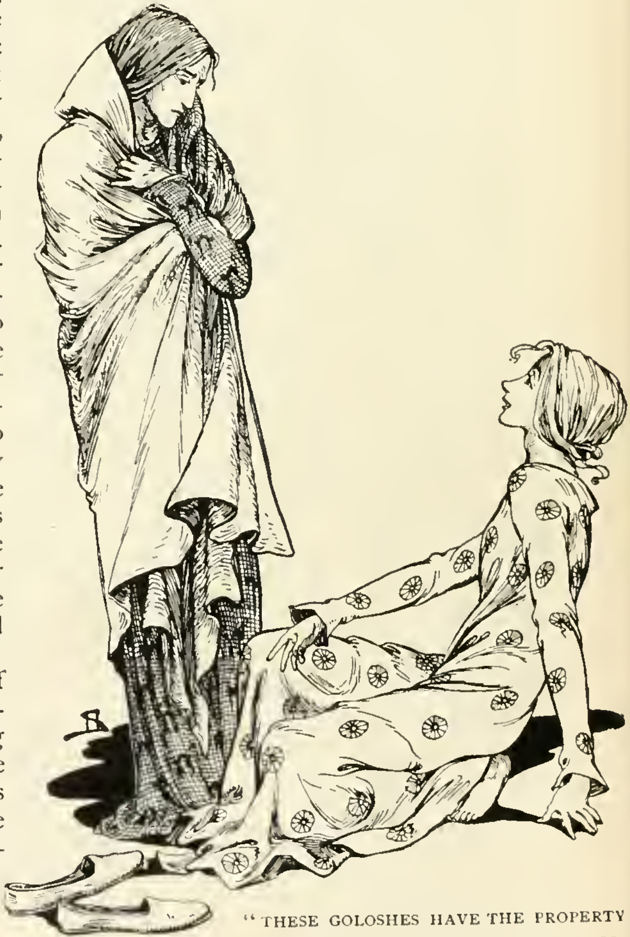
* * *

The Goloshes of Happiness

I.—A BEGINNING

IN a house in Copenhagen, not far from the King's New Market, there was company. A great many persons had been invited, probably in the hope of receiving return invitations. Half of the company had already sat down to the card table, and the other half was awaiting the result of the hostess's question: "Well, what shall we do?" They had got thus far, and the entertainment was beginning to go on smoothly enough. Amongst other things, the conversation happened to turn upon the Middle Ages, which some few persons deemed far more interesting than our own times. The councillor of justice, Knap, maintained this opinion so warmly that the lady of the house immediately went over to his side, and both fell foul of the conclusions relative to old and modern times drawn by Oersted in his almanack, in which the preference, in all essential points, is given to our age. The councillor of justice looked upon the era of the Danish king Hans[1] as the noblest and most happy of all.

While this topic forms the ground-work of the conversation, which was only momentarily disturbed by the arrival of a newspaper containing nothing worth reading, we will go out into the ante-room, where the mantles, sticks, and goloshes were laid by. Here sat two maidens, a young one and an old one, just as if they had come to accompany their mistresses home; but, on a nearer inspection, one could have perceived that they were no common abigails. Their



"THESE GOLOSHES HAVE THE PROPERTY INSTANTLY TO TRANSPORT WHOMSOEVER SHALL PUT THEM ON TO THE PLACE AND TIME HE BEST LIKES."

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[1] He died in 1513. He was married to Christine, daughter of the Electoral Prince Ernest of Saxony.

noble figures, delicate skins, and the very cut of their clothes, forbade such a possibility. They were a couple of fairies. The younger was not Happiness herself, but a waiting-maid of one of her lady's-maids, who distribute the minor gifts of Happiness. The elder looked rather gloomy: she was Care; she always looks after her own affairs personally, and then she knows they are properly attended to.

They related to each other where they had been that day. The messenger of Happiness had only performed some trifling acts, coming more under the denomination of luck, such as saving a new hat from a shower, obtaining for an honourable man a bow from a titled nonentity, and so forth. But what remained was something quite unusual.

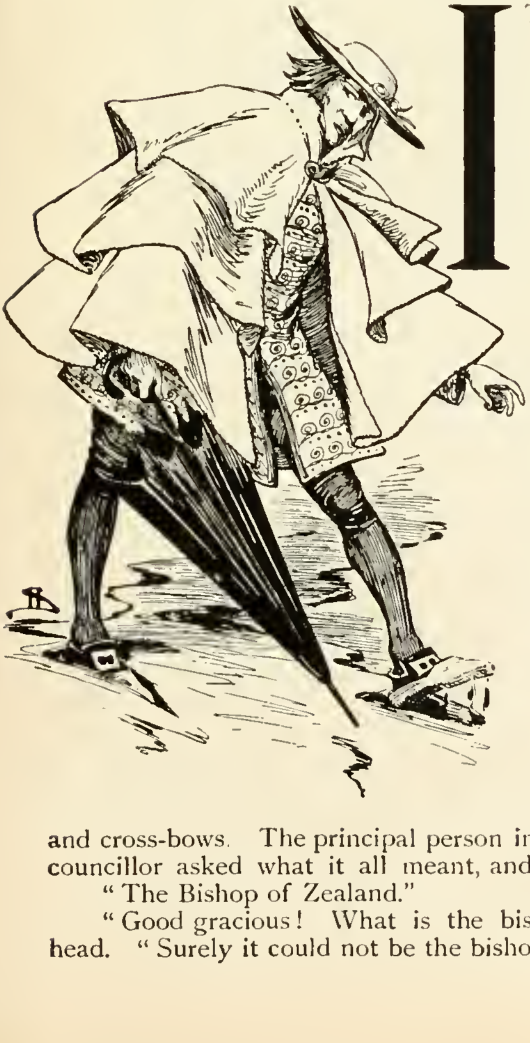
"I must tell you," said she, "that it is, to-day, my birthday, in honour of which I have been entrusted with a pair of goloshes that I am to introduce amongst mankind. These goloshes have the property instantly to transport whomsoever shall put them on to the place and times he best likes. Every wish relative to time, place, or existence will be instantly fulfilled, and one mortal, at least, will be happy, for the time being, here below."

"So you fancy," said Care; "most likely he will be very unhappy, and will bless the moment when he gets rid of the goloshes."

"What are you thinking about?" said the other. "Now, I'll place them near the door; some one will get hold of them, and be happy."

Such was the conversation that passed between the two.

II.—WHAT BEFELL THE COUNCILLOR OF JUSTICE



IT was late. Councillor Knap, who was deep in his speculations about King Hans' days, now wanted to go home, and Fate so ordained it that he drew on the Goloshes of Happiness instead of his own, and stepped out into East Street. Only, being transported back to the times of King Hans, by the magic spell of the goloshes, he immediately set his foot into the mire and swamp of the street, which in those days boasted no pavement.

"How dreadfully dirty it is here!" said the councillor. "The whole pavement has vanished, and all the lamps are out."

The moon had not risen high enough, and the air was, besides, so thick that all the surrounding objects were confused in the gloom. At the nearest corner there hung a lantern in front of an image of the Madonna; but the light was as good as nothing at all, for he only perceived it when he was just under it; and his eyes fell on the painted Child and His mother.

"Probably," thought he, "this is some curiosity-shop, where they have forgotten to take down the sign."

A couple of men, in the dress of the Middle Ages, passed by him.

"What odd figures!" thought he. "Surely they come from a masquerade."

There suddenly struck up a sound of drums and fifes, while torches shed a brilliant light. The councillor started back in amaze, and now beheld a most singular procession pass before him! First came a whole troop of drummers, that were belabouring their instruments amain; these were followed by body-guards with bows and cross-bows. The principal person in the procession was a clerical gentleman. The astonished councillor asked what it all meant, and who the man could be?

"The Bishop of Zealand."

"Good gracious! What is the bishop thinking about?" sighed the councillor, shaking his head. "Surely it could not be the bishop!" While trying to make out the truth, the councillor, who could see neither to the right nor to the left, went through East Street, and across the Häbro Platz. The bridge leading to the square in front of the palace was not to be found, and he perceived he was near the bank of a shallow sheet of water, and at length met two people in a boat.

"Does his honour wish to be ferried over to the Holme?" asked they.

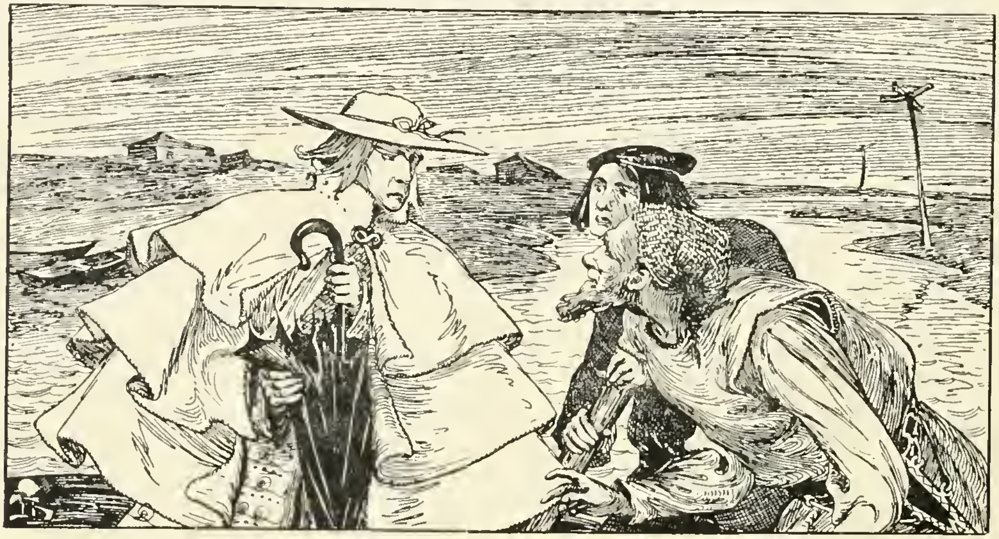
"To the Holme!" echoed the councillor of justice, not knowing the age he was in. "I want to go to Christianshaven, and to Little Market Street."

The people stared at him.

"Tell me where the bridge is," said he. "It is really shameful that the lamps are not lighted hereabouts; and, besides, it is as dirty as if one were wading through a swamp."

The more he talked with the boatmen, the more incomprehensible they appeared to him.

"I don't understand your gibberish," said he, at last, in a pet, and turned his back upon them



THE MORE HE TALKED WITH THE BOATMEN, THE MORE INCOMPREHENSIBLE THEY APPEARED TO HIM.

He could not find the bridge, and there was no parapet. "It is scandalous what a state the place is in!" said he. And the age he lived in had never appeared more pitiful than it did this evening. "I think the best thing I could do would be to have a droschka," thought he. But where were the droschkas? Not one was to be seen. "I must go back to the stand in the King's New Market, and find a coach, or else I shall never reach Christianshaven."

He now went to East Street, and was nearly through it, when the moon emerged from a cloud.

"Good gracious! what is this scaffold put up here for?" said he, on seeing the East Gate, which in those days stood at the end of East Street.

He managed, however, to find an opening, which led him to our New Market, but which was then a large meadow. A few bushes stood around, and a wide canal or stream crossed right through the meadow. A few miserable wooden booths, for the convenience of Dutch ships, stood on the opposite shore.

"Either I am deceived by a *fata morgana*, or I must be tipsy!" said the councillor. "What's this? What's this?"

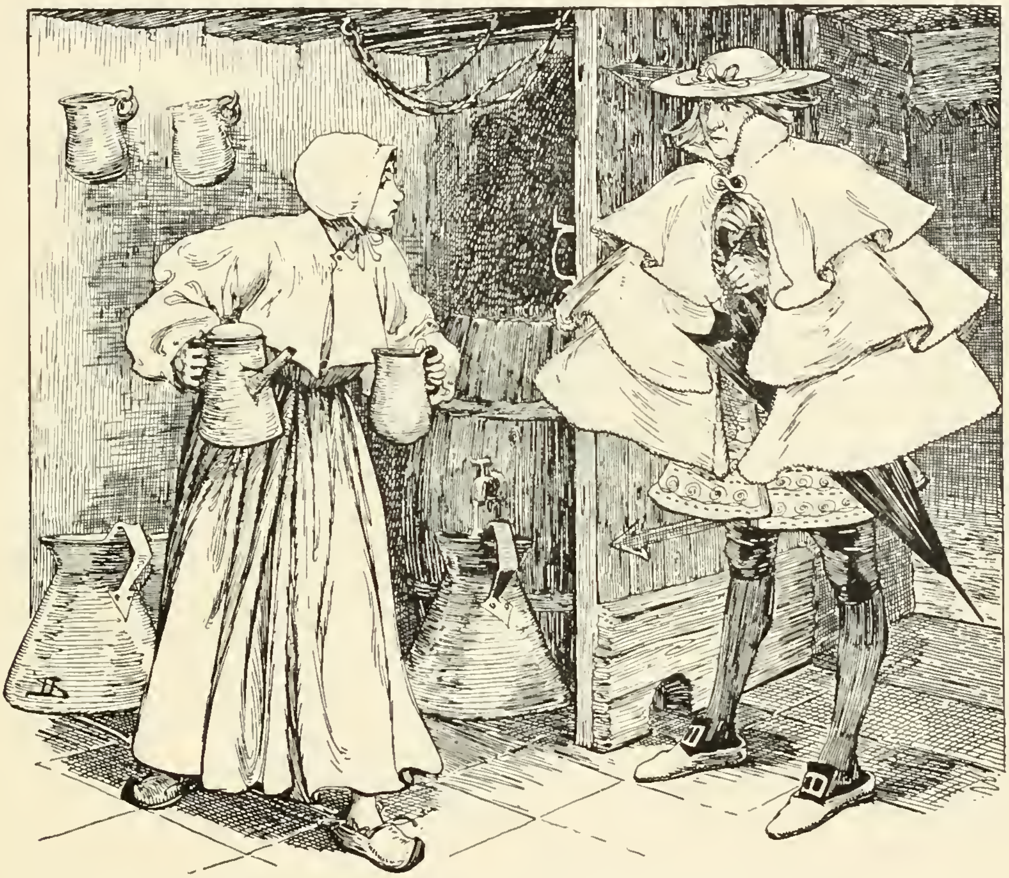
He turned back, in the full persuasion that he must be ill; and, on again retracing his steps through the street, he looked more attentively at the houses. They were mostly built of boards, and had only thatched roofs.

"I am ill, to a certainty!" sighed he; "and yet I only drank one glass of punch. But I never can stand it; and, moreover, it was quite monstrous to give us punch and hot salmon. I must mention it to the lady. Suppose I went back, and said how I feel? Only it looks so ridiculous; and then it is a question, after all, whether they are still up."

He looked for the house, but it was not to be found.

"It is really frightful! but I can't recognise East Street. There is not a shop to be seen, and nothing but wretched old tumble-down houses, just as if I were in Roeskilde or Ringstedt. Surely I must be ill! So there's no use making any ceremony. But where, in the world, is the house? It is no longer the same; only there are still persons stirring in it. Oh! I must be very ill!"

He now pushed against a half-open door, through a chink in which a light was streaming. It was an inn such as existed in those times, being a kind of ale-house. The room looked like a Dutch interior: a knot of people, composed of seamen, Copenhagen citizens, together with a couple of learned men, were in deep converse over their pitchers, and paid little attention to the new-comer.



"EXCUSE ME," SAID THE COUNCILLOR OF JUSTICE TO THE LANDLADY; "I AM VERY ILL, AND SHOULD BE GLAD IF YOU COULD SEND FOR A DROSCHKA TO DRIVE ME TO CHRISTIANSHAVEN."

"Excuse me," said the councillor of justice to the landlady; "I am very ill, and should be glad if you could send for a droschka to drive me to Christianshaven."

The woman stared at him, and shook her head, and then spoke to him in German. The councillor thought that she did not know Danish, and therefore repeated his request in German, which, together with his clothes, confirmed her in the opinion that he must be a foreigner. She soon understood that he was ill, and brought him a pitcher of water, which did, to be sure, smack somewhat of salt water, though it was drawn from the well outside.

The councillor leant his head on his hand, fetched his breath, and then endeavoured to sift the meaning of all the strange things that had befallen him.

"Is that the last number of the *News of the Day*?" asked he mechanically, seeing the landlady laying by a large piece of paper, which he took for the newspaper of his own times.

She did not understand what he meant, but handed him the paper. It was a woodcut, representing a meteor that had been seen in the town of Cologne.

"This is very old," said the councillor, brightening up at the sight of this piece of antiquity. "How did you come by this singular sheet? It is extremely interesting, although the whole is but a fiction. Such phenomena are now accounted for as being a kind of aurora borealis; and they probably arise from electricity."

Those who sat near him, and heard what he said, looked at him in great astonishment, and one of them rose, and doffed his hat respectfully, saying, with a serious face: "You must certainly be a most learned man, monsieur."

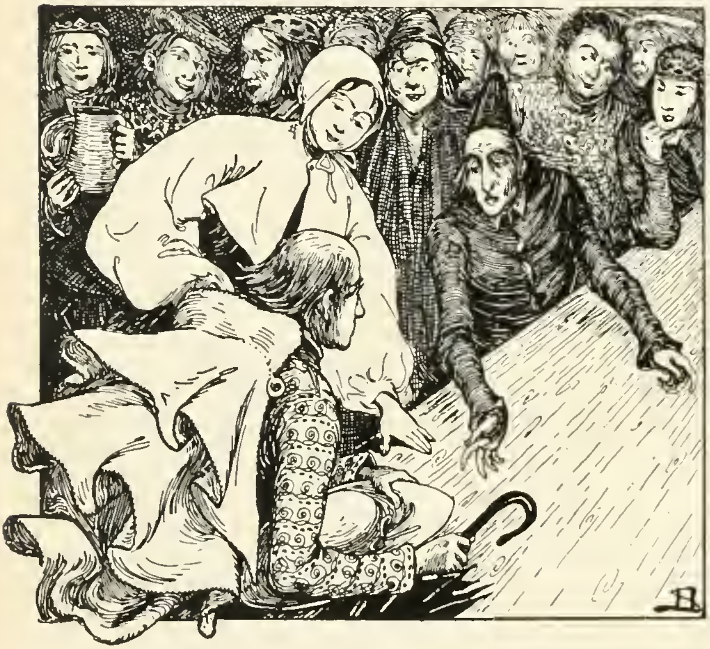
"Oh, by no means," returned the councillor; "I can only discuss those topics that everybody must know something about."

"*Modestia* is a great virtue," said the stranger; "moreover, I may add to your speech, *mihi secus videtur*; though, in this case, I willingly suspend my *judicium*."

"May I ask whom I have the pleasure of addressing?" returned the councillor.

"I am a *Baccalaureus Scripturæ Sacræ*," said the man.

This answer satisfied the councillor; for in this case the title agreed with the dress. "This is surely," thought he, "some old village schoolmaster—one of those odd fellows one still meets with occasionally in Jutland."



"HOW ARE YOU NOW?" SAID THE LANDLADY, PULLING THE COUNCILLOR'S SLEEVE.

"This is no *locus docendi*," observed the stranger; "yet, I wish you would favour us with your conversation. You are assuredly deeply versed in antiquarian lore."

"Why, yes," replied the councillor of justice; "I like to read all useful old writings: but I like the modern ones as well, with the exception of the 'Domestic Tales,' of which we really have a surfeit."

"'Domestic tales'?" inquired our baccalaureus.

"Yes; I allude to the new novels that come out."

"And yet," said the bookworm, smiling, "they are very witty, and are read at court. The king is especially fond of the romance of Sir Iwain and Sir Gawain, which treats of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. He joked about it with the gentlemen of his court."

"Well, I have not read that," said the councillor; "it must be quite a new one, published by Heiberg."

"No," said the other, "not by Heiberg, but by Godfred von Gehmen."

"Oh, is that the publisher?" said the councillor. "That's a very old name. Why, the first printer and publisher in Denmark was called the same."

"Yes, he is our first printer," said the man.

So far, so good; then one of the citizens spoke of the plague that raged a few years previous, meaning 1484. The councillor thought it was the cholera that was alluded to; and so the conversation got on. The buccaneers' war of 1490 was so recent that it could not fail to be touched upon. The English buccaneers had captured ships in the road, and the councillor being versed in the events of 1801, quite agreed with them in blaming the English. The rest of the conversation, however, did not turn out so well, and was continually assuming the tone of a funeral oration. The good baccalaureus was too ignorant for him not to consider the simplest observations of the councillor as both bold and fantastical. They stared at each other, and when they could not get on at all, the baccalaureus spoke Latin, in hopes of being better understood; but it was of no use.

"How are you now?" said the landlady, pulling the councillor's sleeve. His recollection now returned, for, in the course of the conversation, he had clean forgotten all that had happened.

"Good gracious! where am I?" said he, and he grew dizzy as he thought about it.

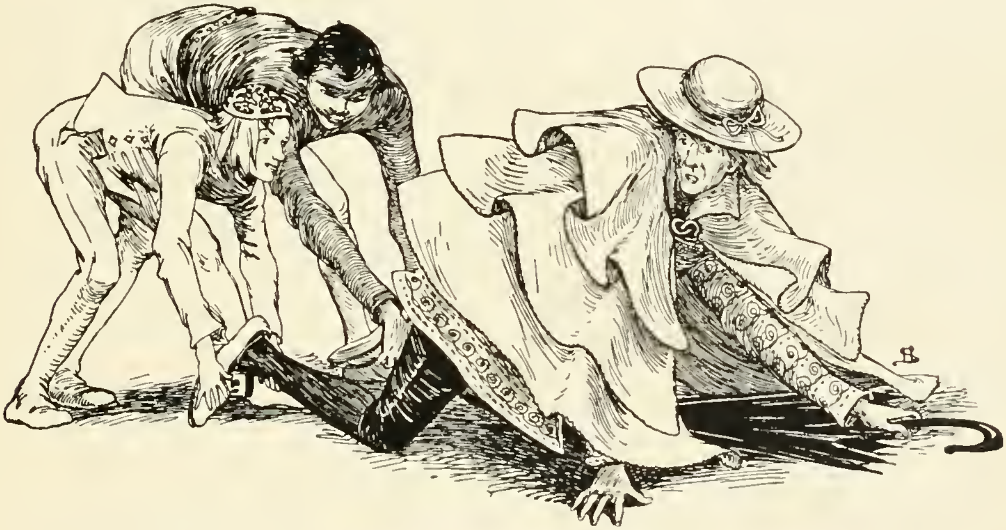
"Let's drink claret, mead, and Bremen beer!" cried one of the guests, "and you shall join us."

Two maids came in and poured out the drink, and retired with a curtsey. The councillor felt a cold shiver run through his frame.

"What is this? What is this?" repeated he. But he was forced, willy-nilly, to drink with them, for they overpowered the good man with their kind attentions. He was in despair, and when one of them observed that he was tipsy, he never doubted the truth of the man's words, but begged them to procure him a droschka.

They now thought he was speaking Muscovitish.

He had never before been in such rough and vulgar company. "One would think the land had returned to paganism," observed he; "this is the most dreadful moment of my life." But just then, it entered his head to stoop under the table, and creep from thence to the door; which he accordingly proceeded to do, only, just as he was going out, the company perceived his intention, and seized him by the feet, when, luckily for him, the goloshes came off, and with them vanished the whole vision.



JUST AS HE WAS GOING OUT, THE COMPANY PERCEIVED HIS INTENTION AND SEIZED HIM BY THE FEET.

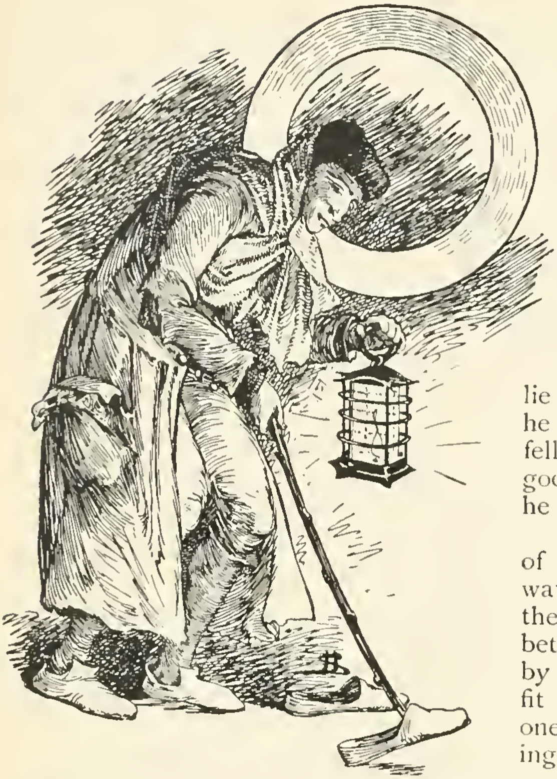
The councillor now plainly saw a lamp, and a large building behind it; everything looked familiar and handsome. It was East Street, such as we know it. He lay with his legs turned towards a door, and opposite sat the watchman asleep.

"Bless me! have I been lying here in the street, dreaming?" said he. "Yes, this is East Street. How beautifully bright and gay it looks! It is shocking to think how a glass of punch must have upset me!"

Two minutes after, he sat in a droschka, that drove him to Christianshaven. He thought of all the anxiety and misery that he had endured, and now heartily relished the happy reality of our own age, which, with all its shortcomings, is yet far superior to the one in which he had so lately found himself.

* * *

III.—THE WATCHMAN'S ADVENTURE



ll, here's a pair of goloshes," said the watchman, "which no doubt belong to the lieutenant who lives up there. They are lying close to the door."

The worthy man would willingly have rung, and delivered them, for there was still a light in the upper story; but, not wishing to disturb the sleep of the people in the house, he let them rest.

"Those sort of things must keep one nice and warm," said he. "They are of such soft leather." They fitted his feet exactly. "What an odd world this is!" mused he: "now there's a fellow who might lie in his warm bed, yet, hang me if he does. There he walks up and down the room! That's a happy fellow for you! He has neither wife nor children, and goes into company every evening. How I wish I were he; I should then be a happy man indeed."

No sooner had he spoken this wish than the magic of the goloshes, which he had put on, took effect, and the watchman merged into the lieutenant. He now stood up there in his room, holding a piece of pink note-paper between his fingers, on which was penned a poem written by the lieutenant himself—for who has not had a lyrical fit once in their lives? And then, if one writes down one's thoughts, they of course flow in poetry. The following verses were written on the paper:—

"Were I but rich!" I often sighed
In boyhood's days, and thought with pride,
If rich I'd be a soldier brave,
With sword and snowy plumes that wave—
A soldier's colours now I have,
But richer never shall I be,
        Alas, poor me!

I mind me once, in early youth,
A little maiden kissed my mouth,
For rich was I in fairy lore,
Though still—alas! in gold so poor;
But she by money set no store—
My wealth all lay in youthful glee,
        Alas, poor me!

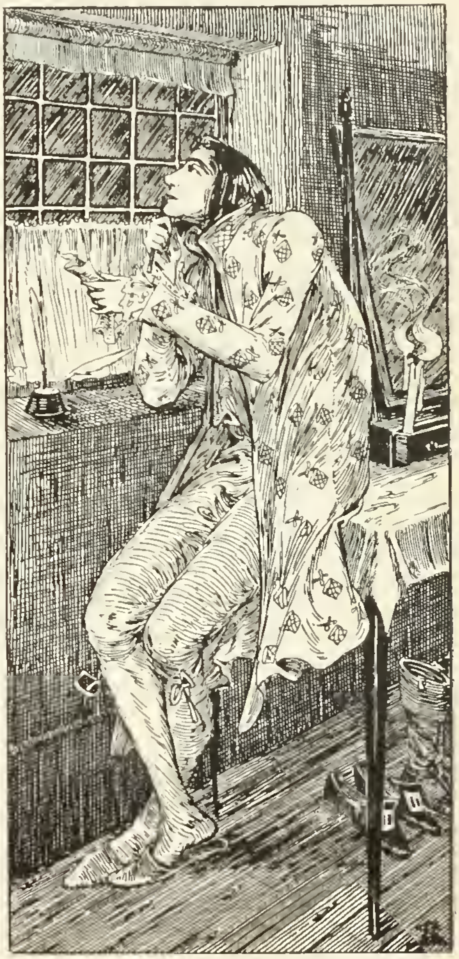
"Were I but rich!" is still my prayer—
The child has grown a woman fair,
Good, beautiful, and true as gold.
Oh! might I but my heart unfold,
Or she but read the tale untold;
But I must ever silent be—
        Alas, poor me!

Oh! were I rich in peace and rest,
Not paper should my woes attest.
May she I love but read this leaf,
And learn my youthful joys were brief,
And moist with tears this tale of grief,
For dark my future still must be,
        Alas, poor me!

One writes such verses as these when one is in love; but a rational man does not print them. Lieutenant, love, and poverty form a triangle, or, perhaps, rather the half of the broken die of luck. The lieutenant felt this to be the case, and, therefore, leant his head against the window-frame, and sighed deeply.

"The poor watchman out in the street," thought he, "is happier than I am. He does not suffer from the same penury as I do. He has a home, a wife, and children, who weep at his sorrows, and rejoice over his joys. I should be far happier could I exchange my existence for his, and wander through life with no higher hopes and expectations than his. Yes, he is far happier than I."

At the same moment, the watchman again became a watchman; for, after having passed into the lieutenant's existence by means of the Goloshes of Happiness, he had found himself so much less contented than he expected that he preferred the state he had rejected a moment before. Therefore the watchman was a watchman once more.



THE LIEUTENANT FELT THIS TO BE THE CASE, AND, THEREFORE, LEANT HIS HEAD AGAINST THE WINDOW-FRAME, AND SIGHED DEEPLY.

"It was an ugly dream," said he, "but funny enough. I thought myself the lieutenant up above there, and yet I was not satisfied. I missed my wife and my brats, who are all ready to smother me with their kisses."

He sat down again, and began to nod. He could not get his dream out of his head; for he had still the goloshes on his feet. A falling star shot across the sky.

"There goes one," said he; "however, there are plenty left. I should like to be able to examine them a little closer, and particularly the moon, for that would not slip through one's fingers. When we die, says the student for whom my wife washes, we fly about from one star to the other. It is not true; but it would be very pretty, if it were. I wish I could take a leap up thither, while my body remained lying here on the door-steps."

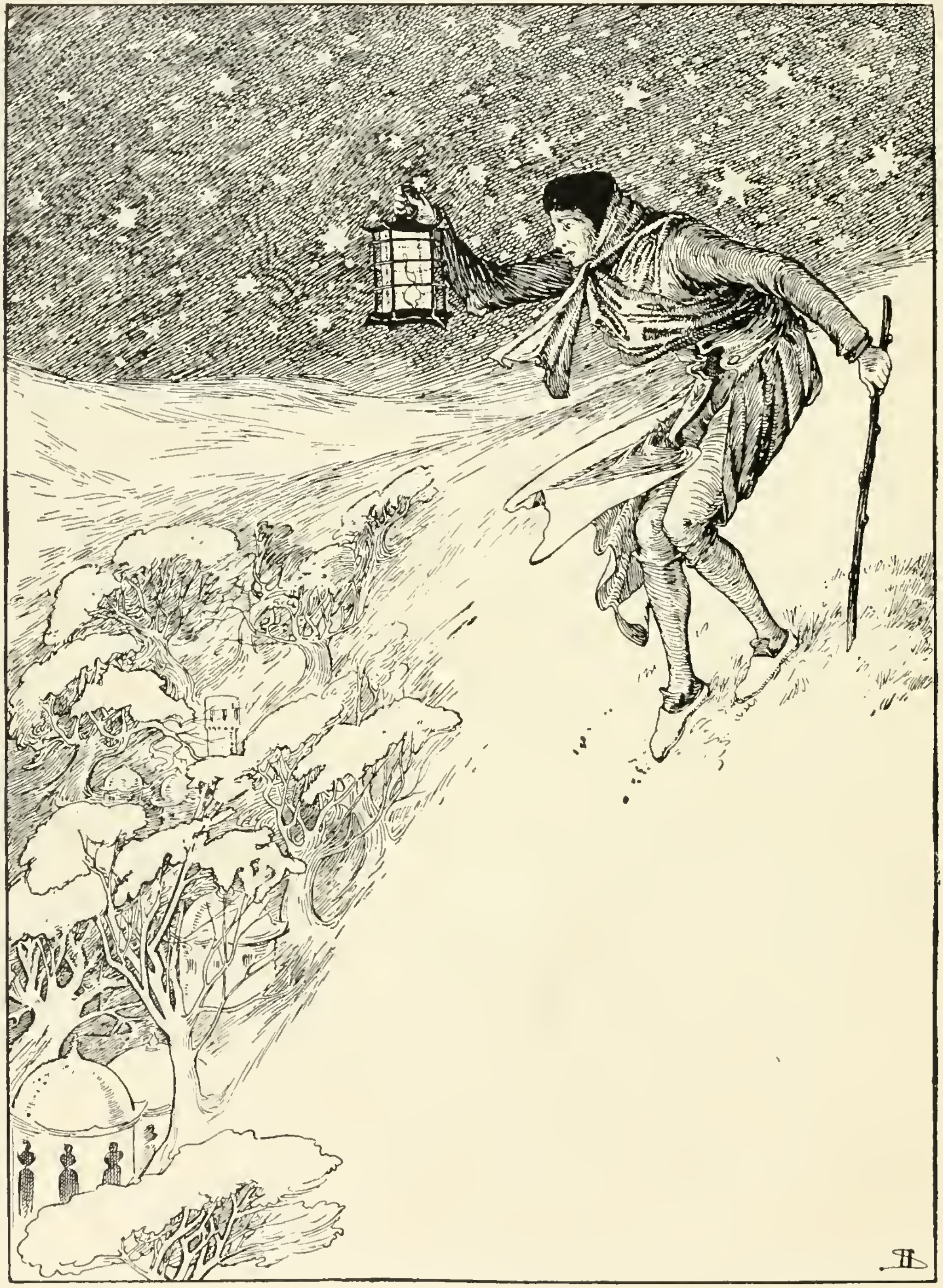
There are certain things in the world that one must be very cautious of pronouncing aloud; and one need be doubly so when one has the Goloshes of Happiness on one's feet. Now you shall hear what befell the watchman.

We are nearly all of us acquainted with the locomotive powers of steam, which we have experienced either on a railway or in a steamer; yet such modes of transport are like the pace of the sloth or the snail compared to the rapidity with which light journeys. It flies nineteen million times faster than the best racer, yet electricity is more rapid still. Death is an electric shock, which we receive in our hearts; and our soul, thus set free, flies away on the wings of electricity. A sunbeam requires only eight minutes and a few seconds to perform a journey of twenty millions of miles;* but, with the aid of an express train of electricity, the soul requires still fewer minutes to achieve its flight. The space between the spheres is no greater for the soul than the distance is for us, in the same town, from one friend's house to another, supposing them to lie in the same neighbourhood. Nevertheless, this electric shock through our hearts costs us the use of our bodies here below, unless we happen, like the watchman, to be wearing the Goloshes of Happiness.

In a few seconds, the watchman had cleared the 52,000 miles* up to the moon, which, as we all know, is of a much lighter material than the earth, and as soft as new-fallen snow, as we should call it. He found himself on one of the countless circular ranges of mountains that we see in Dr. Mädler's large map of the moon. In the interior it formed a kind of caldron, of the perpendicular depth of about half a mile. Below, there lay a town, of the appearance of which we can form a

* The Danish mile is equal to about 4¾ English miles.

faint idea by turning the white of an egg into a glass of water. The materials it was built of were just as soft, and shadowed forth towers, with cupolas and galleries in the form of sails, quite transparent, and swimming in the thin air. Our earth floated above his head, like a large, deep red ball.



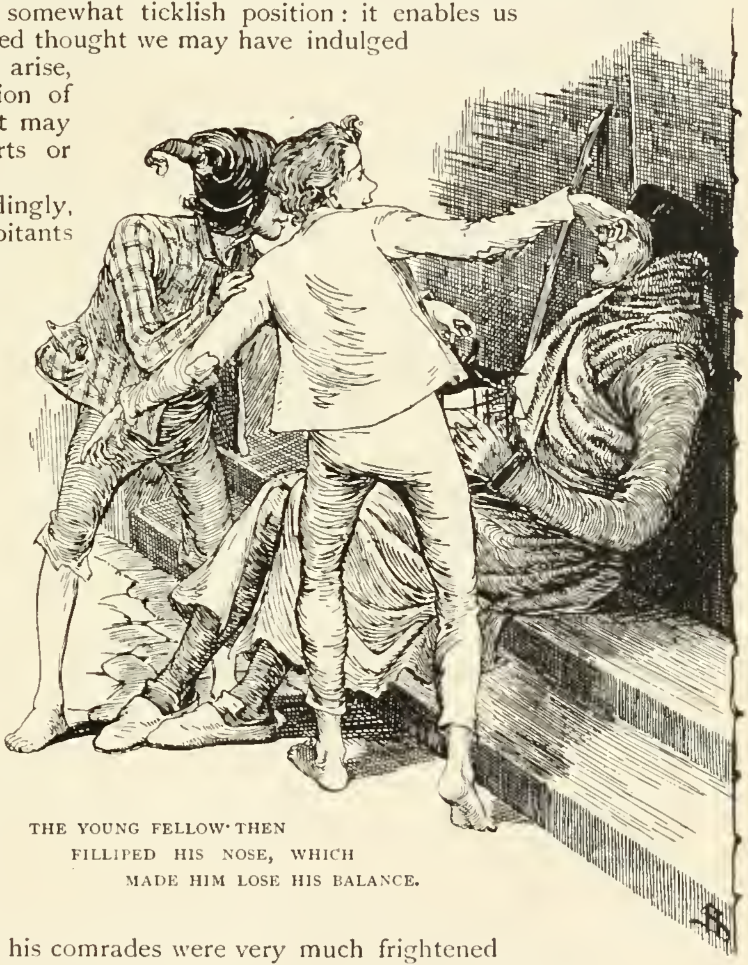
HE FOUND HIMSELF ON ONE OF THE COUNTLESS CIRCULAR RANGES OF MOUNTAINS THAT WE SEE IN DR. MÄDLER'S LARGE MAP OF THE MOON.

He then perceived a number of beings, that were assuredly meant for what we should call men; but they looked quite different from us. A much richer imagination than the pseudo-Herschel's had called them into existence. If they were placed in groups, and then painted, one would say: "That is a pretty arabesque." They had, too, a language of their own; though nobody could require of the watchman's soul to understand it. Nevertheless, it was able to do so; for our souls have far greater capabilities than is generally supposed. Does it not show an astonishing talent for dramatic composition in our dreams, where each of our acquaintances speaks so perfectly in character, and so exactly in the voice belonging to him, that we should never be able to mimic it half so well in our waking hours? How well, too, our soul reminds us of persons whom we have forgotten for years, when they suddenly start up to our recollection with the most vivid distinctness, even to their smallest characteristics. After all, our souls' capacity for thinking seems to place us in a somewhat ticklish position: it enables us to recall every sin and every wicked thought we may have indulged in; and then the question will arise, whether we should be in a condition of account for every guilty word that may have been whispered in our hearts or have risen to our lips.

The watchman's soul, accordingly, understood the language of the inhabitants of the moon very tolerably. They were disputing about our earth, and doubted whether it could be inhabited. The atmosphere, they contended, must be too thick for rational, moon-born beings to live in it. They considered that the moon alone was inhabited, and was the real earth, where lived the ancient inhabitants of the world.

They likewise talked politics — but we will descend to East Street, and see what happened to the watchman's body.

It lay lifeless on the steps. His star-tipped mace had fallen from his hand, and his eyes were turned upwards to the moon, where his honest soul was rambling.


THE YOUNG FELLOW THEN FILLIPED HIS NOSE, WHICH MADE HIM LOSE HIS BALANCE.

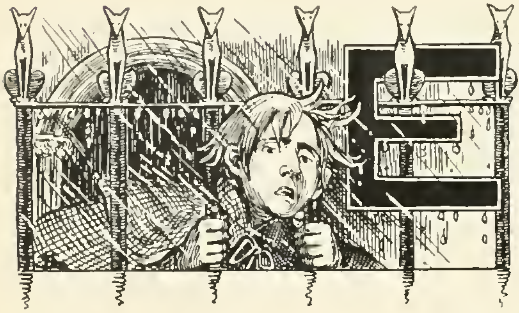
"What's o'clock, watchman?" asked a passer-by. But no answer did the watchman return. The young fellow then filliped his nose, which made him lose his balance. There lay the body, sprawling at full length: the man was dead. All his comrades were very much frightened —dead he was, and dead he remained. Notice was given of the event; it was talked over; and at dawn the body was removed to the hospital.

This was likely to prove a pretty joke for the soul, in case it returned, and, in all probability, went to seek for its body in East Street, and could not find it. Most likely, it would have applied first to the police, and next repaired to the directory office, that inquiries might be made for it amongst other lost articles; and, lastly, have found its way to the hospital. However, we may comfort ourselves with the conviction that the soul is wisest when acting on its own impulse; the body alone makes it stupid.

As before said, the watchman's body was carried to the hospital, where it was taken into a room to be cleaned, when, naturally, the first thing they did was to take off the goloshes, thereby forcing his soul to return. It immediately took the straightest road to its earthly tenement, and in a couple of seconds the poor man had revived. He assured the bystanders that this had been the most dreadful night in his existence: he would not take two gold pieces to be obliged to undergo such sensations over again. However, luckily, it was over now.

He was discharged that same day, but the goloshes remained in the hospital.

IV.—AN EVENTFUL MOMENT—A VERY UNUSUAL JOURNEY



EVERY inhabitant of Copenhagen knows what the entry to Frederick's Hospital is like, but as it is probable that some non-residents in that town may read this little tale, we will give a short description of its appearance.

The hospital is divided from the street by a rather high iron railing, the bars of which are so wide asunder that, it is said, very slim fellows have squeezed themselves through, and gone to pay their visits in the town. The part of the body most difficult to get through was the head; so in this, as in most cases in the world, the little heads were the best off. Thus much may serve as an introduction to what follows.

One of the young assistants, who had, only physically speaking, a large head, was upon duty this very evening. The rain was pouring down; yet, in spite of these two obstacles, he positively wanted to go out. It was only for a quarter of an hour, therefore not worth while, thought he, to let the porter into his confidence, if he could but slip through the iron railings. There lay the goloshes the watchman had forgotten; and though it never occurred to him that it could be those of Happiness, he thought they might do him good service in such weather, and therefore he put them on. Now, the question was, whether he could squeeze himself through the railings, which he had hitherto never attempted. And there he stood.

"Would to Heaven my head was on the other side!" said he; when, big as it was, it instantly slipped safely through. The goloshes had contrived to effect this; but now the body must needs follow, and that was no easy job.

"I am too stout," said he. "I thought the head was the worst. I shall not be able to get through!"

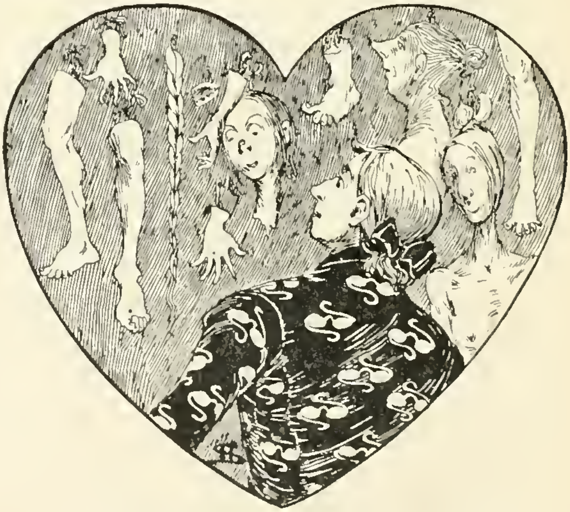
He now attempted to withdraw his head suddenly, but this he found impracticable. He could move his neck easily enough, but that was all. His first feeling was vexation; but in a few seconds his spirits fell below zero. The Goloshes of Happiness had brought him into this dreadful scrape, and, unluckily, it did not occur to him to wish himself well out of it. No, instead of wishing, he kept striving, but without being able to free himself. The rain continued pouring down, and not a being was to be seen in the street. He could not reach the bell, and how was he to get loose? He foresaw that he must stand here until dawn, when a locksmith must be sent for, to file the iron rails. But that would be a long job: the charity-school opposite would be astir; and the whole adjoining neighbourhood, that is swarming with sailors, would come to see him standing in the pillory, and there would be such a crowd!

"Oh! the blood rushes to my head so that I shall go mad!" cried he. "Yes! I am crazy. Oh! would that I could get loose, and then it would pass off."

He should have said so sooner. At the very moment the wish was expressed, his head was freed, and he started back, half distracted by the fright the Goloshes of Happiness had occasioned him.

But it must not be thought his trials ended here—no! more things were yet to come.

The night and the day following had passed by, and the goloshes were not claimed.



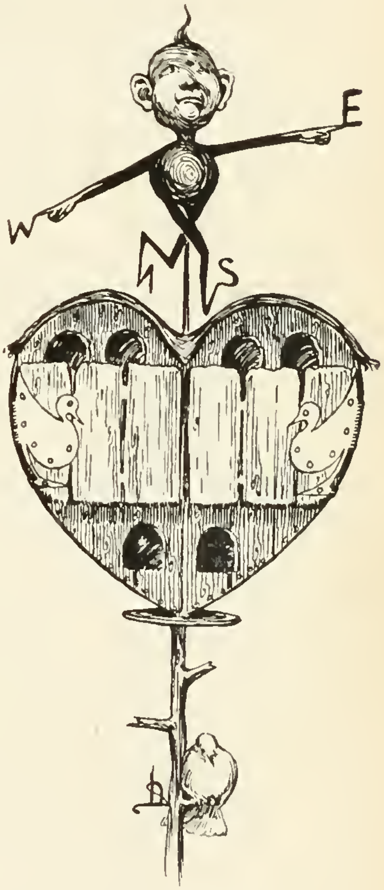
THE FIRST HEART HE ENTERED WAS A LADY'S, BUT AT FIRST HE FANCIED HE HAD GOT INTO AN ORTHOPÆDIC INSTITUTION.

That evening there was to be a declamatory performance in an amateur theatre, situated in a distant street The house was crowded, and amongst the spectators was the assistant from the hospital, who seemed to have forgotten the preceding evening's adventure. He had on the goloshes, which had not been fetched away; and as the streets were dirty, he thought they might do him good service. A new poem, entitled "My Cousin's Spectacles," was recited. These spectacles, it was pretended, if put on when one sat facing a large assembly, made all the people present look like cards, from which one could foretell all that was to happen to them in the following year.

This idea struck him forcibly, that he would like to have had such a pair of spectacles. Perhaps, if used properly, they might enable one to see into the hearts of those present, which was far more interesting, he thought, than to see what would happen to them next year, for that one would learn in the end, while the other remained a sealed book. "I can fancy myself peeping into the hearts of the gentlemen and ladies on the first row of benches," said he to himself. "It would be like looking into a kind of shop; and how my eyes would rove all over it! I am sure I should find a large millinery establishment in yonder lady's heart; that other lady's shop is empty, but it would be all the better for a little cleaning. But perhaps there may be some better shops amongst the rest? Indeed there are!" sighed he. "I know one in which everything is solid, only there is a shopman in it already, and that is its only fault! From many others, the words, 'Pray come in,' would be sure to be heard. I wish I could step in like a little, tiny thought, and glide through the hearts of those now present."

This was the cue for the goloshes. The assistant shrank up, and set out on a most unusual journey through the hearts of the front row of spectators. The first heart he entered was a lady's, but at first he fancied he had got into an orthopædic institution, where plaster casts of deformed limbs were hanging on the walls, only with this difference, that in the institution the casts were taken when the patient comes in, while in this heart the casts had been taken and preserved after the worthy owners had left the place. They were casts of female friends, and their physical and moral defects were here carefully treasured up.

A moment after he was in another female heart. Only this one appeared to him like a spacious, holy church, where the white dove of innocence was hovering over the high altar. He would willingly have sunk on his knees, but he was obliged to slip into the neighbouring heart. Yet he still heard the tones of the organ, and he fancied himself a newer and better man. He felt himself not unworthy to enter the next sanctuary, which showed him a shabby garret, with a sick mother. But God's warm sunshine streamed through the window, lovely roses were nodding their heads in the little wooden box on the roof, and two azure birds sang of childlike joys, while the sick mother called down blessings on her daughter's head.



HER HUSBAND'S PORTRAIT SERVED AS A WEATHERCOCK.

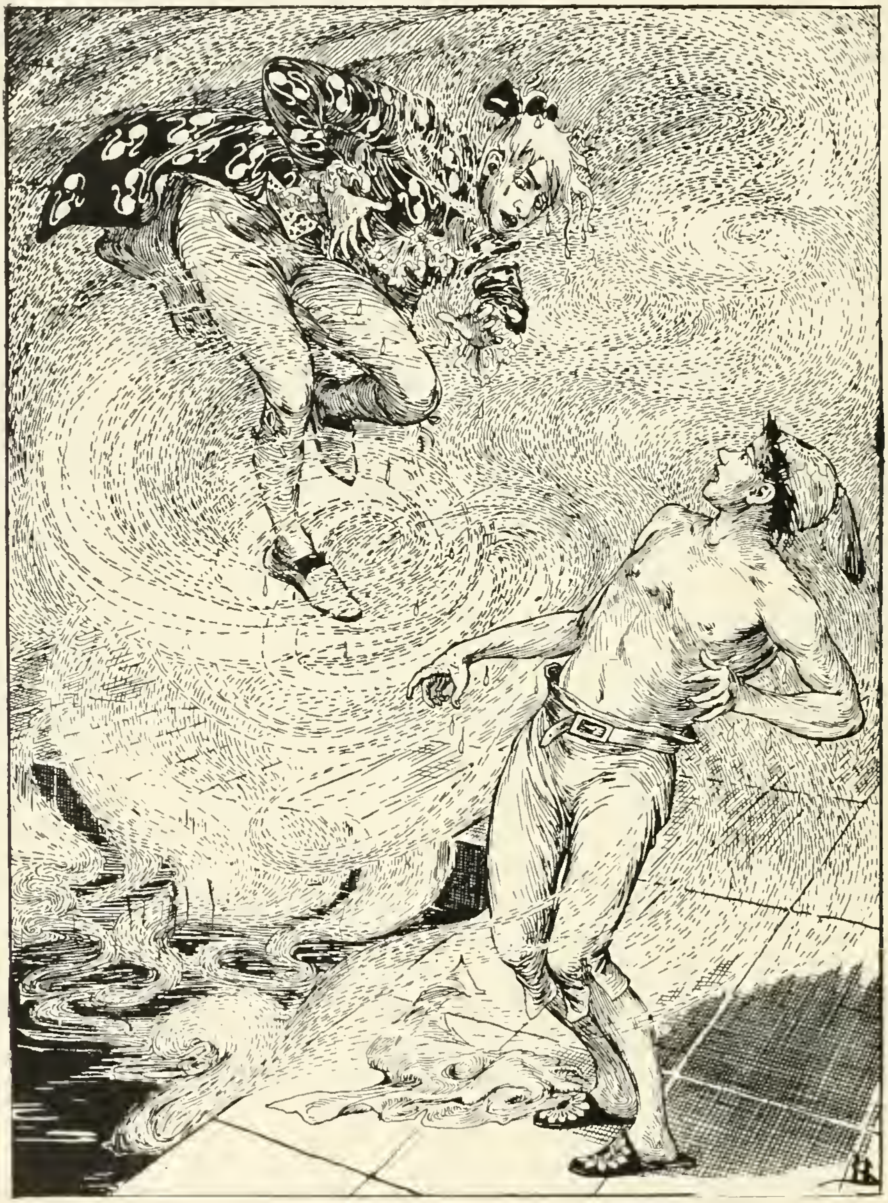
He now crept on all fours through an over-loaded butcher's shop. He stumbled over meat, and nothing but meat. This was the heart of a wealthy and respectable man, whose name stands, beyond a doubt, in the directory.

He now entered the heart of the rich man's wife, which was an old tumble-down dovecot. Her husband's portrait served as a weather-cock, and it was combined with the doors, so that they opened and shut just as the husband veered about.

He next entered a cabinet lined with looking-glasses, like the one in the Rosenburg palace; only the glasses magnified everything to an extraordinary degree. In the middle of the floor, like a Delhi Lama, sat the insignificant self of the owner, lost in the contemplation of his own greatness.

He now thought himself transported into a narrow needle-case, full of sharp needles. So he thought: "This must be the heart of some old maid." It was not, however, the case, it was that of a young officer with several orders, of whom it was generally said that he was a man of sound heart and intellect.

The poor assistant came out of the last heart in the row half stunned. He could not collect his thoughts, and concluded that it was his over-vivid imagination that had led him this dance.



THE ATTENDANT UTTERED A LOUD EXCLAMATION AT THE SIGHT OF A MAN IN ALL HIS CLOTHES.

"Good gracious!" sighed he, "surely I have a propensity for going crazy! It is so very hot in this place that my blood rushes to my head." And he now called to mind the great event of the preceding evening, when his head had stuck between the railings of the hospital. "It must have arisen from that," thought he, "and I must see to it in time. A vapour bath would do me good. I wish I were now lying on the upper shelf of one."

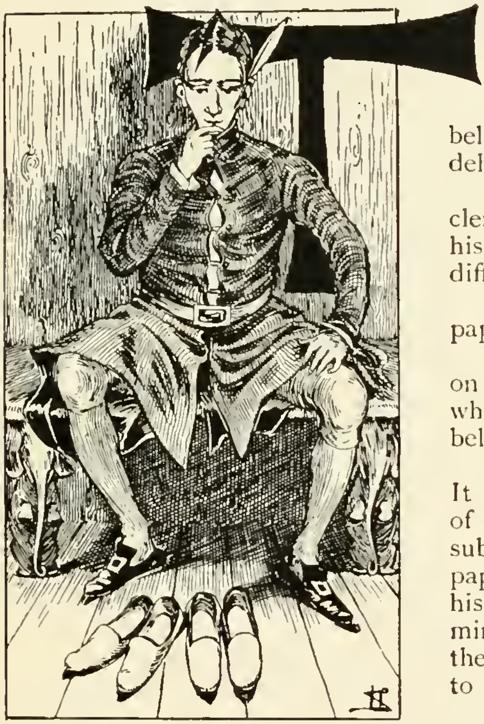
And he instantly found himself lying on the upper shelf of a vapour-bath, only with his clothes, boots, and goloshes still on. The hot drops of water fell from the ceiling upon his countenance.

"Dear! dear!" cried he, getting down to take a shower-bath. The attendant uttered a loud exclamation at the sight of a man in all his clothes.

He had sufficient presence of mind to whisper to the assistant: "It is a wager." But the first thing he did on reaching his own room was to put a large blister on his neck and another on his back, in order to draw out his madness.

Next morning his back was quite raw, and this was all he gained by the Goloshes of Happiness.

V.—THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CLERK



THE watchman—our old friend, whom we have not forgotten — recollected meanwhile the goloshes he had found and taken to the hospital. He therefore fetched them away; but as neither the lieutenant nor anybody belonging to the street recognised them as their property, he delivered them over to the police.

"They are very like my own goloshes," said one of the clerks, looking at the foundlings, and placing them beside his own. "It's only a shoemaker's eye that could see the difference of a pin between them."

"Master clerk," said a servant, coming in with some papers.

The clerk turned round to speak to the man, after which, on looking once more at the goloshes, he felt quite uncertain whether the pair on his left or that on his right were those belonging to him.

"It must be the wet ones that are mine," thought he. It happened to be quite the reverse, for it was the Goloshes of Happiness that were wet. But may not the police be subject to err occasionally? So he drew them on, put his papers into his pocket, and took several manuscripts under his arm, which he was going to read through and take minutes from at home; but it was Sunday afternoon, and the weather was fine. "It would do me good to take a turn to Fredericksberg," thought he, and away he went.

There was not a quieter or less frivolous young man in the world than he. So we will not grudge him his little walk, which could but be good for his health after so much sitting. He went his ways at first like a person without thought or wish; therefore, the goloshes had no opportunity to display their magic powers.

In one of the avenues he chanced to meet with an acquaintance, one of our younger poets, who told him that next day he intended setting out on his summer's journey.

"Are you already about to start?" cried the clerk. "What a free and happy man you are! You can fly whither you please, while such as we are chained by the foot."

"Only it is fastened to a bread-tree," returned the poet. "You have no cares for the morrow, and in your old age you will obtain a pension."

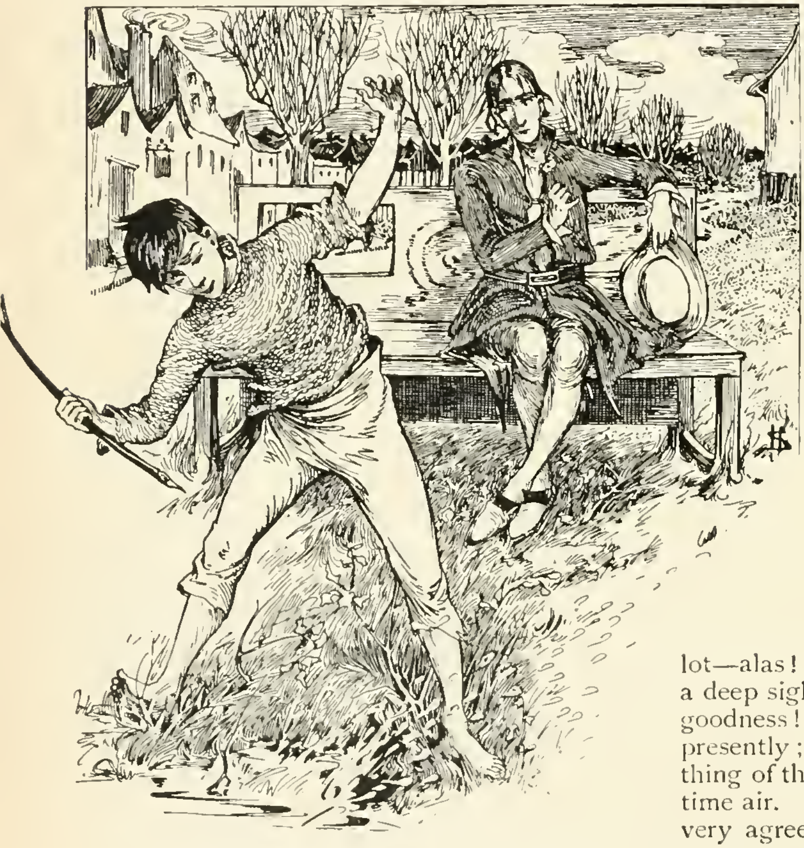
"Yours is the best life, after all," said the amanuensis. "It is a pleasure to sit and write verses. The whole world says agreeable things to you, and then you are your own master! You should only try for once how you would like to sit in a court of justice, and be bored with the trivial matters we have to listen to."

The poet shook his head, and the clerk shook his. They each retained their own opinion, and thereupon they parted.

"These poets are a peculiar race," thought the clerk. "I should like to try the experiment of becoming identified with a poet's being. I am certain I should not write such wretched verses as the rest of them! Here's a true spring day for your poet! The air is so unusually clear, the clouds are so beautiful, and the trees and grass are quite fragrant. For years I have never felt as I do at this moment!"

We may already perceive that he had become a poet. To chronicle such a fact would, in most cases, be highly absurd; for it is a foolish idea to imagine a poet to be different from other men, since far more poetical natures may frequently be met with amongst the crowd than we often find in many a professed poet. The only difference is, that a poet's intellectual memory is better: he can keep hold of an idea or a feeling, till it is clearly and plainly embodied in words, which the others cannot do. Nevertheless, the transition from a humdrum, every-day sort of nature, to a more gifted one, is a great transition, and could but strike the clerk.

"What a delicious perfume!" said he; "it reminds me of my Aunt Lone's violets. Ay, that was when I was a little boy. Dear me! how long it is since I have thought of those times. She is a good old maid! She lives yonder behind the Exchange—and she used always to have a sprig, or a few green shoots, in water, let the winter be ever so severe. The violets used to scent the room, while I would lay warm copper pennies on the frozen window-panes, to make holes to peep through. And a pretty view it was that I looked upon. There lay the ships, ice-bound in the canal, and deserted by their crews; a croaking raven alone manned one of the vessels. Then when came the spring breezes, everything grew animated; the ice was sawed through amidst songs and cheers, the ships were tarred and tackled, and they sailed for foreign shores. I remained here, and here I am likely to remain, nailed to my seat in the police-office, and condemned to see others taking out their passports to go abroad. Such is my lot—alas! that it should be so!" said he, with a deep sigh. He then paused a moment. "My goodness! what has come to me?" cried he, presently; "I have never thought or felt anything of the kind before. It must be the spring-time air. It makes one quite uneasy, yet it is very agreeable." He felt in his pocket for his papers. "These will afford food for very different ideas," said he, glancing his eye over the first page, when he read: *Mistress Sigbrith; an Original Tragedy, in five Acts.* What is this?—and in my own handwriting too. Can I have written this tragedy? *An Intrigue on the Ramparts, or Fast-day: a Vaudeville.* But how, in the name of fortune, did I come by them? They must have been put into my pocket—but here is a letter." This was from the manager of the theatre, who refused the pieces, and had not taken the trouble to couch his epistle in the most courteous terms either. "Hem—hem"—said the clerk, sitting down on a bench, while his thoughts grew quite elastic, and his heart waxed vastly soft. He involuntarily seized hold of the nearest flower, which proved to be a little common daisy. This tiny flower tells us in a moment that which a botanist takes many lectures to expound. It related the myth of its birth, and told the power of the sunshine, which expands its delicate leaves, and compels it to yield a perfume. He then reflected on the struggles of life that likewise awaken sensations in our bosoms. Light and air are the flower's lovers, but light is the favoured swain. The flower turns towards the light, and,



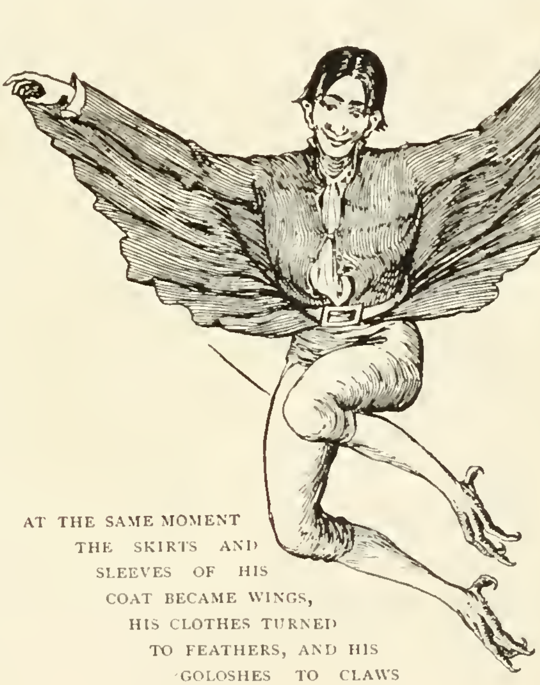
CLOSE BY STOOD A BOY, STRIKING WITH A STICK IN A SWAMPY DITCH.

as soon as it disappears, rolls up its leaves, and sleeps in the embraces of the air. "It is light that adorns me," said the flower. "But the air gives you life," whispered the poet's voice.

Close by stood a boy, striking with a stick in a swampy ditch; and as drops of water splashed through the green boughs, the clerk thought what millions of animalcules were thrown up into the air in each single drop, and to a distance as great for them, in proportion to their size, as it would be for us to be whirled up above the clouds. While these reflections crossed the clerk's mind, and as he mused upon the change that had come over him, he smiled, and said to himself: "I am sleeping and dreaming! Still, it is remarkable how naturally we can dream, and yet be aware all the time that it is nothing but a dream. I hope I shall be able to remember it to-morrow when I wake. I seem to be most unusually capable of doing so. I have a clear perception of everything, and feel quite awake, yet I am sure that if I retain any of it to-morrow, it will seem most stupid stuff—this has happened to me before! It fares just the same with all the wise and witty things one says and hears in dreams, as with the money of the underground folk—which is rich and splendid when one receives it, but turns to stones and dried leaves by daylight. Ah!" sighed he sorrowfully, as he gazed at the birds that were warbling, and hopping from branch to branch, "they are far better off than I. Flying is a splendid gift! Happy he who is born with it! Yes; if I could transform myself into any other shape, I would assume that of a little lark!"

At the same moment the skirts and sleeves of his coat became wings, his clothes turned to feathers, and his goloshes to claws. On perceiving this metamorphosis, he smiled inwardly, observing: "This is the finishing stroke to convince me that I am dreaming. But I never before dreamt such foolish things." And he flew up into a green branch and sang—but there was no poetry in his song, for the poetical element had left him. The goloshes, like all those who do things thoroughly, could only attend to one thing at a time. He wanted to be a poet, and he was one. Now he wanted to be a little bird, and in order to become a bird, he must abdicate his former individuality.

"This is delightful!" said he. "By day I sit in the police-office, amongst the most matter-of-fact deeds; and by night I can dream that I am flying about as a lark in the Fredericksberg garden. Really, a whole comedy might be written on the subject."


AT THE SAME MOMENT THE SKIRTS AND SLEEVES OF HIS COAT BECAME WINGS, HIS CLOTHES TURNED TO FEATHERS, AND HIS GOLOSHES TO CLAWS

He now flew down to the grass, twisted his head about in all directions, and pecked at the pliant blades, that appeared to him, in proportion to his present size, like the palm-trees of Northern Africa.

In another moment it was as dark as pitch all round him. An enormous object seemed to be thrown over him, which was in reality only a large cap that a sailor boy flung over the bird. A hand was thrust under the cap, which seized the clerk by the back and wings, till he screeched again. In his first alarm he cried out: "You shameless scapegrace! I'm a clerk in the police-office." But to the boy it only sounded like "tweat-tweat!" He gave the bird a knock on its bill, and took him away.

In the avenue he met a couple of schoolboys, belonging to the educated class; that is to say, in a social point of view; for as regards intellect they might be reckoned as appertaining to the lowest class of the school. They purchased the bird for eightpence, and so the clerk returned to Copenhagen.

"It is well that I am only dreaming," said the clerk, "or else I should be quite angry. I was first a poet, and now I'm a lark. It was the poetical element, to a certainty, that transformed me into this little animal. It is a lamentable story, especially when one falls into boys' hands. I shall like to know how it will end."

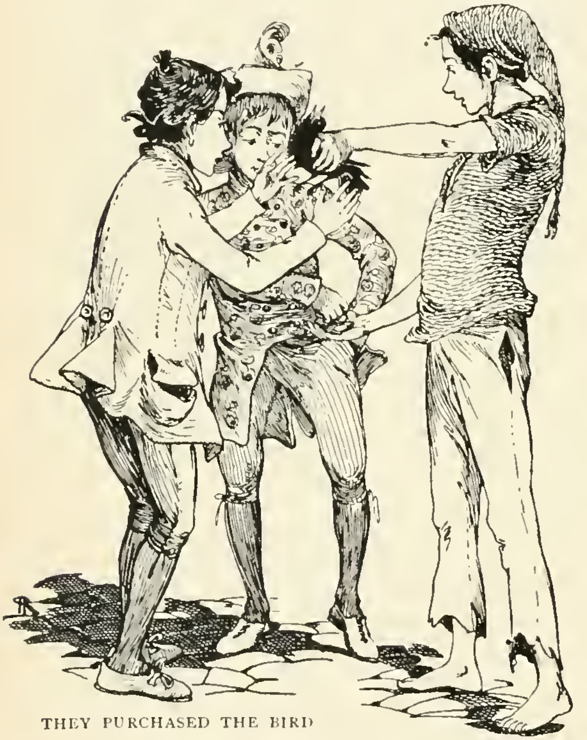
The boys took him into a most elegant room, where they were received by a stout, smiling lady. But she was not very well pleased that a common field-bird, as she termed the lark, should be introduced into the house. She would only put up with it just for this one day, provided, however, the bird were placed in the empty cage near the window. "It will perhaps please Poll," added she, smiling at a large, green parrot, who was rocking himself very majestically on his swinging perch, in the pretty brass-wired cage. "It is Poll's birthday," said she tenderly, "and therefore the field-bird begs to offer his congratulations."

Poll did not answer a word, but continued see-sawing in dignified silence; on the other hand a pretty canary-bird that had been brought last summer from the sunny, fragrant land of his birth, began singing loudly.

"You little screamer!" said the lady, throwing a white handkerchief over the cage.

"Tweat! tweat!" sighed he, "what a dreadful snow-storm!" And so saying he was silent.

The clerk, or, as the lady would have called him, the field-bird, was placed in a little cage, close to the canary-bird, and not far from the parrot. The only human sentence that Poll could chatter, and which sometimes made a very droll effect, was: "Now, let us be men." All the rest of the noise he screamed was just as unintelligible as the twittering of the canary-bird; but not to the clerk, who was now himself a bird, and consequently understood his comrades perfectly.



THEY PURCHASED THE BIRD FOR EIGHTPENCE, AND SO THE CLERK RETURNED TO COPENHAGEN.

"I used to fly beneath green palm-trees and blooming almond-trees," sang the canary-bird. "I used to fly with my brothers and sisters over lovely flowers, and across the limpid surface of the lake, where plants were waving to and fro in the waters below. I used to see many pretty parrots, who told the most entertaining stories—and they knew so many stories, and such long ones!"

"Those were wild birds," returned the parrot, "who were wholly uneducated. Now, let us be men! Why do you not laugh? Since the lady and all her visitors laugh at this, you surely might. It is a great defect not to be able to appreciate what is witty. Now, let us be men!"

"Do you remember the pretty girls who used to dance beneath the tent, beside the trees in full blossom? Do you remember the delicious fruit, and the cooling sap of the wild herbs?"

"Oh yes," said the parrot, "but I'm much better off here. I am well fed, and treated with distinction. I know that I am intellectual, and I desire nothing better. Now, let us be men! You have what is called a poetical soul. I have solid acquirements and wit, while you have genius, but no discretion. You raise your natural tones to so high a pitch that you get covered over. That is never done to me—oh, dear me, no! for I cost them a great deal more. I overawe them with my beak, and can utter witty sayings. Now, let us be men!"

"O my warm and blooming country!" sang the canary-bird, "I will sing your dark green trees, and your calm gulf, where the boughs kiss the clear surface of the water—and I will sing the joys of my glittering brothers and sisters, who are frolicking in the land where grows the cactus."

"Do leave alone these elegiac strains," said the parrot, "and sing something to make one laugh. Laughter is the sign of the highest point of all intellect. You never see a dog or a horse laughing. No—they can cry, but to man alone is given the faculty of laughter. Ho-ho-ho!" laughed the parrot, adding his oft-repeated witty saying: "Now, let us be men."

"You little grey Danish bird," said the canary-bird, "you, too, have become a prisoner. It must be very cold in your forests, but still there's liberty to be found in them. Fly away! They have forgotten to close your cage, and the window is open at the top. Fly away! fly away!"

The clerk instinctively obeyed and left the cage; at the same moment the half-open door leading to the adjoining room creaked on its hinges, and the cat, with its green, sparkling eyes, stole in and began to pursue him. The canary-bird fluttered in its cage, while the parrot flapped his wings, crying: "Now, let us be men!" The poor clerk experienced the most deadly fright, and flew out of the window, over the houses and across the streets, till at last he was obliged to rest.

A house that stood opposite to him looked familiar. He flew in at the open window, and found himself in his own room. He perched upon the table.

"Now, let us be men!" said he, involuntarily mimicking the parrot, and at the same moment he was the clerk once more—only he was sitting on the table.

"Heaven help me!" said he, "how did I get up here, and fall asleep in this manner? It was an uneasy dream that I had anyhow. The whole of it was most nonsensical stuff."

VI.—THE BEST THING THE GOLOSHES BROUGHT

ON the following day, as the clerk still lay a-bed, some one tapped at his door. It was a neighbour of his, a young theologian, living on the same storey as himself, who walked in.

"Pray lend me your goloshes," said he; "it is so, wet in the garden, although the sun is shining brightly, and I want to go down and smoke a pipe."

He drew on the goloshes, and was presently down in the garden, that contained one plum-tree and one apple-tree. Yet even so small a garden as that is a treasure in the midst of a town.

The theologian sauntered up and down the walk. It was now six o'clock, and he heard a postman's horn in the street.

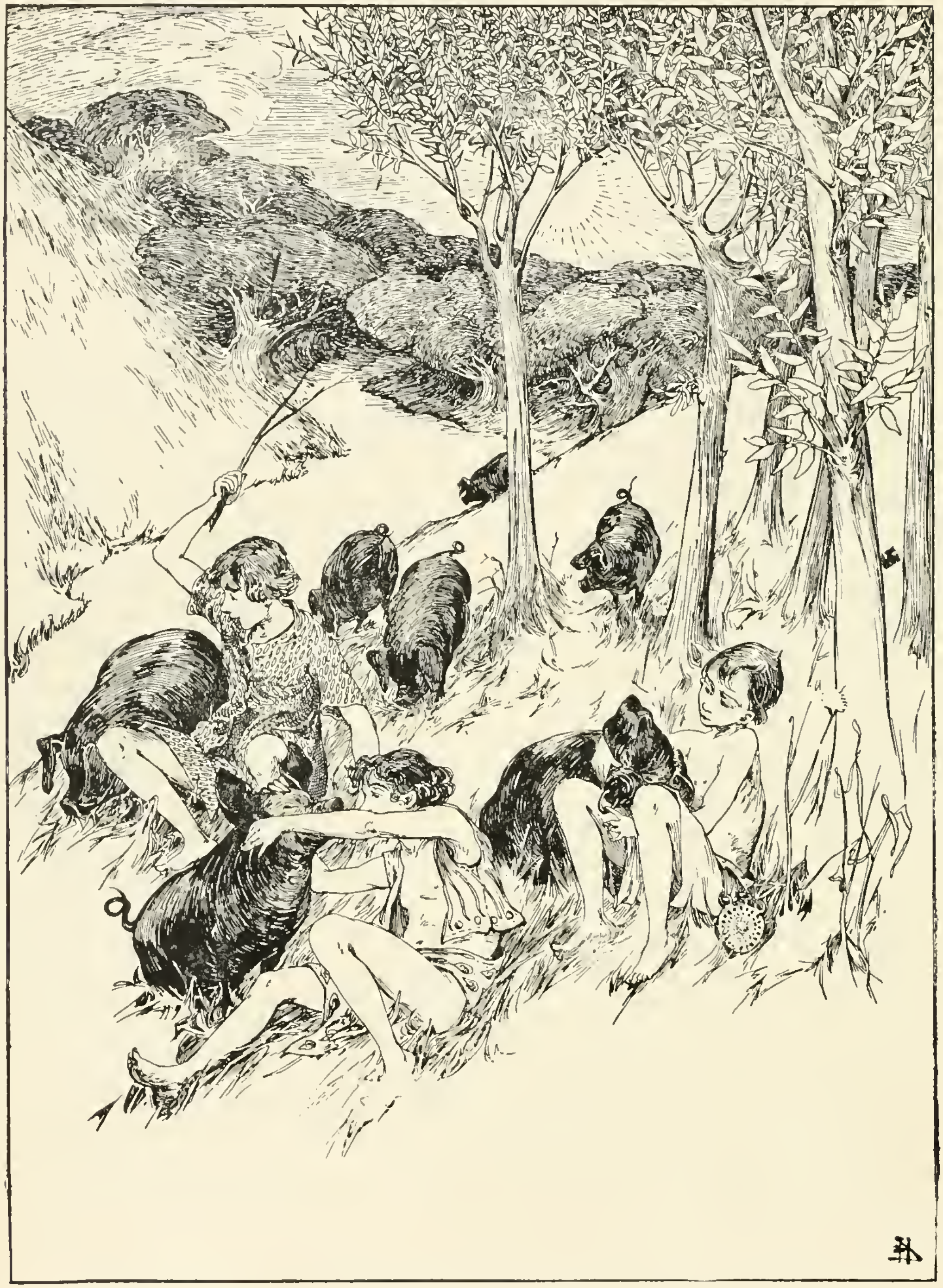
"O travelling—travelling!" cried he, "there is no greater delight in the world! That is the height of all my wishes! My restless feelings would then find a vent and be appeased, provided I went far enough. I should wish to see beautiful Switzerland, and Italy, and——"

It was well the goloshes took immediate effect, or else he would have travelled rather too far, both for himself and for us. He was now journeying through Switzerland, only packed inside a diligence with eight fellow-passengers. His head ached, his neck was stiff, and the blood had rushed downwards to his feet, which were swollen, and sorely pinched by his boots. He was in a dreamy state between waking and sleeping. In his right-hand pocket was a letter of credit, in his left-hand pocket his passport, and a small leather purse, in which a few louis-d'ors were carefully stitched up. Every dream pictured forth the loss of one or other of these valuables, and he would awake from his naps with a feverish start, when the first evolution his hand described was a triangular one from right to left, and to the top of his breast, to feel whether his goods were still in his possession. Umbrellas, sticks, and hats were swinging about in the net above his head, and quite spoiled the prospect, which was a most imposing one. He just peeped at it, while his heart sang the lines, which a poet, whom we know, sang in Switzerland, though hitherto he has not had them printed:—

"'Tis lovely here beyond compare,
I see Mont Blanc's white finger—
And till my money melts to air,
I gladly here would linger."

The landscape around was grand, dark, and gloomy. The forests of fir-trees appeared like so much heath on the high rocks, whose summits were lost in clouds of mist. It now snowed, and a cold wind began to blow.

"Oh, dear!" sighed he; "I wish we were on the other side of the Alps, and then it would be summer, and I should have taken out the money for my letter of credit. I am so uneasy about its safety that I cannot enjoy Switzerland. Oh, how I wish I were on the other side!"



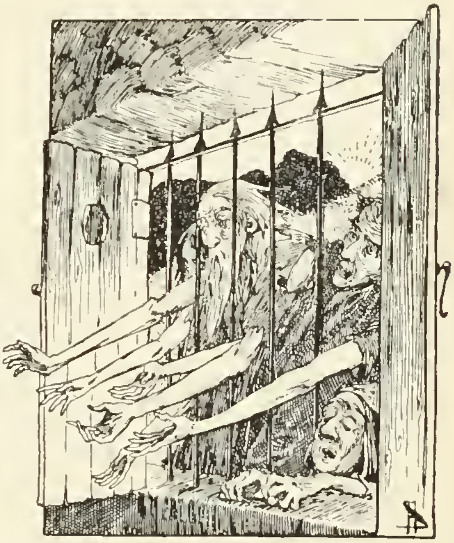
LOVELY, HALF-NAKED CHILDREN WERE TENDING A HERD OF COAL-BLACK SWINE, UNDER A KNOT OF FRAGRANT LAURELS.

Accordingly, he was on the other side, and far away into Italy, between Florence and Rome. The Lake of Thrasymene lay like a sheet of flaming gold, in the glowing sunset, between the dark blue mountains. Here, where Hannibal defeated Flaminius, the tendrils of the vines were peacefully clasping each other's green fingers; while lovely, half-naked children were tending a herd of coal-black swine, under a knot of fragrant laurels. If we could but picture forth this scene correctly, every one would exclaim: "Delightful Italy!" But neither the theologian nor any of his fellow-travellers in the coach felt inclined to say anything of the kind.

Thousands of venomous flies and gnats were swarming in the coach. It was in vain they drove them away with a sprig of myrtle: the flies stung them in spite of all their efforts. There was not a person in the coach whose face was not swollen and bleeding from numerous bites. The poor horses looked like skeletons: vast armies of flies were encamped on their backs, and they only obtained a temporary relief by the coachman getting down, and rubbing their tormentors off. The sun now set. An icy coldness, though but of short duration, pervaded all nature: it was like the cold air of a vault after a hot summer's day; but the surrounding mountains and the clouds displayed that peculiar green tint which we find in old pictures, and which we look upon as unnatural, unless we have seen nature's own colouring in the south. It was a splendid sight, but—their stomachs were empty, and their bodies tired; and all their longings tended towards a lodging for the night, though they did not yet know where that might be. But everybody was far more eagerly on the look-out for that than inclined to admire the beauties of nature.

The road ran through a wood of olives: it was like driving through a grove of knotty willows in his own country. Here stood the lonely inn. A dozen crippled beggars were encamped in front, the most vigorous amongst whom looked, to use an expression of Marryat's, like "hunger's eldest son, just come to the years of manhood." The others were either blind, or had withered legs, that obliged them to creep about on their hands; or shrivelled arms, with fingerless hands. It was squalid poverty, peeping out from its tatters. "*Eccelenza! miserabili!*" sighed they, holding out their diseased limbs. The landlady herself, with bare feet, uncombed hair, and huddled up in a dirty blouse, came forward to receive her guests. The doors were fastened up with twine; the rooms presented floors made of bricks, half of which were scattered about in all directions; bats were flying under the ceilings; and as to the odour——!

"Let's have dinner served up in the stable," said one of the travellers, "and then, at least, we shall know what we are breathing."



THE SHRIVELLED ARMS AND THE MONOTONOUS WHINES OF "*MISERABILI! ECCELENZA!*" CAME IN MUCH FASTER THAN THE BREEZES.

The windows were opened to let in a little fresh air; but the shrivelled arms and the monotonous whines of "*Miserabili! eccelenza!*" came in much faster than the breezes. On the walls were penned inscriptions, most of them railing at *la bella Italia.*

The meal was now served up. It consisted of water soup, seasoned with pepper and rancid oil, which latter played a conspicuous part in the salad. Addled eggs and fried cocks'-combs were the best dishes on the table: even the wine had a strong taste, for it was finely adulterated.

At night the trunks were all placed against the door. One of the travellers was to keep watch while the others slept. It fell to the lot of the theologian. Oh, how sultry it was in that stifling room! The heat was oppressive, the gnats were buzzing about and stinging, while the *miserabili* outside were whining even in their dreams.

"Travelling is all very fine," observed the theologian, "if one could but get rid of one's body. What a pity the body can't rest while the spirit would fly! Wherever I go, I feel a void that oppresses my heart—a longing for something better than the present moment—yes, for something better, and even for the best of all. But where is that to be found? In point of fact, I don't myself exactly know what I want; but I wish to attain a happy goal—ay, the happiest of all."

And no sooner had he spoken these words than he was transported home. The long white curtains were drawn over the windows, and in the middle of the floor stood a black coffin, in which he lay wrapped in the sleep of death. His wish was fulfilled: his body was at rest and his spirit was travelling. "Call no man happy till he is in his grave," were Solon's words; and the case in point offered a fresh proof of their truth.

Every corpse is a sphinx of immortality. Thus, the present sphinx, in its black sarcophagus, recalled in the lines that the living man had penned only two days before :—

"Oh, mighty death! thy silence fills with awe,
'Tis churchyard graves alone that mark thy traces—
But by a ladder, such as Jacob saw,
Shall not our spirit mount to brighter places?

The greatest sorrows oft remain unknown!
Thou who wert lonely till thy day of dying,
By duties stern thy heart was more weighed down
Than by the earth upon thy coil now lying!"

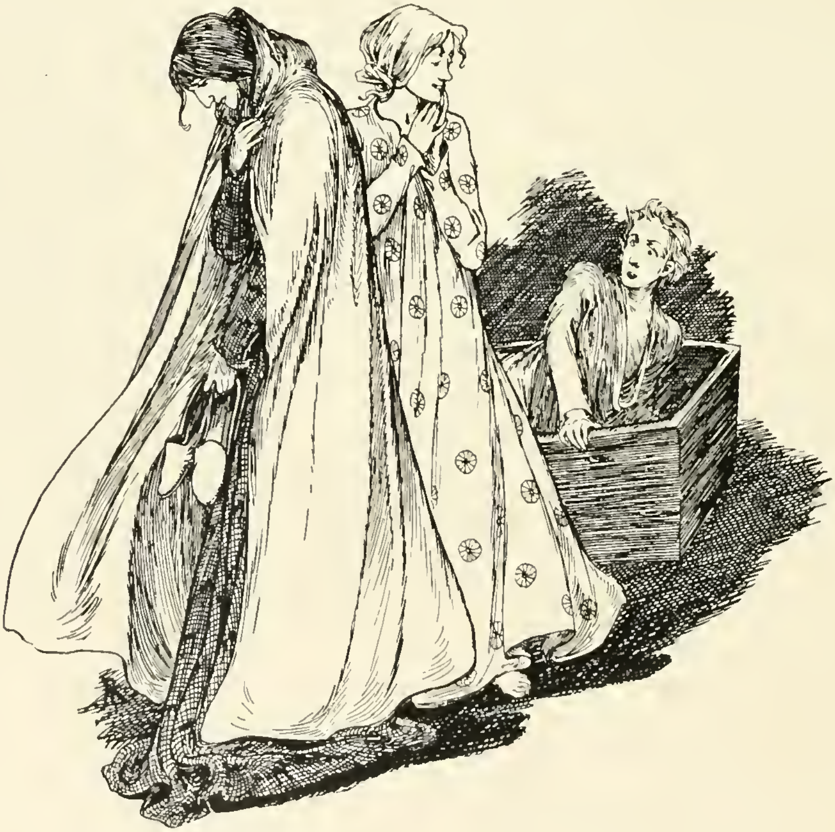
Two figures were moving about the room. They are both known to us. One was the fairy named Care, and the other the ambassadress of Happiness.

"Look there," said Care. "What happiness did your goloshes afford mankind?"

"They have, at least, wrought a lasting good for him who is slumbering here," answered Joy.

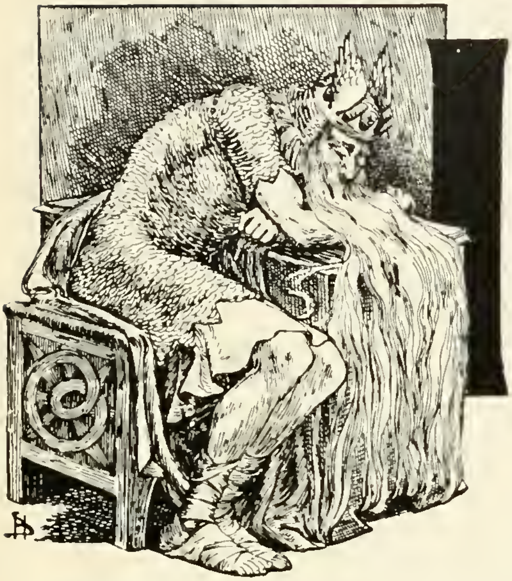
"Not so," said Care. "He went away of himself, without being called. His intellectual powers were not strong enough to dig up the treasures he was destined to discover. I will confer a benefit upon him."

And she drew the goloshes off his feet, when the sleep of death ended, and he once more revived. Care disappeared, and with her the goloshes; she doubtless considered them to be her own property.



SHE DREW THE GOLOSHES OFF HIS FEET, WHEN THE SLEEP OF DEATH ENDED, AND HE ONCE MORE REVIVED.

Holger Danske



IN Denmark there stands an old castle called Kronenburg. It lies near the Sound of Elsinore, where large ships, both English, Russian, and Prussian, daily sail past by hundreds. And they salute the old fortress with cannons that say, "Boom!" And the fortress answers with its cannons, 'Boom!" which is the way cannons say, "Good-morning," and "Your servant." In winter no ships sail by, for all is covered with ice as far as the Swedish coast; but it looks quite like a high road, and Danish and Swedish flags are waving, and Danes and Swedes say to each other, "Good-morning," and "Your servant." But not with cannons — no, indeed! but with a friendly shake of the hand; and they mutually purchase white bread and cracknels of each other, because foreign goods taste the nicest. But finest of all is the old castle of Kronenburg, where Holger Danske sits in a deep, dark cellar, which nobody enters. He is clad in iron and steel, and supports his head on his strong arm: his long beard hangs over the marble table, in which it has taken root. He sleeps and dreams; but in his dreams he sees everything that takes place up above here in Denmark. Every Christmas evening an angel comes to tell him that all he has dreamed is true, and that he may go to sleep again in peace, for that Denmark is as yet in no real peril; but should danger ever occur, then will old Holger Danske rise, and shiver the table to pieces as he withdraws his beard. And then he will come forth in his might, and lay about him, till all the world shall ring with his fame.

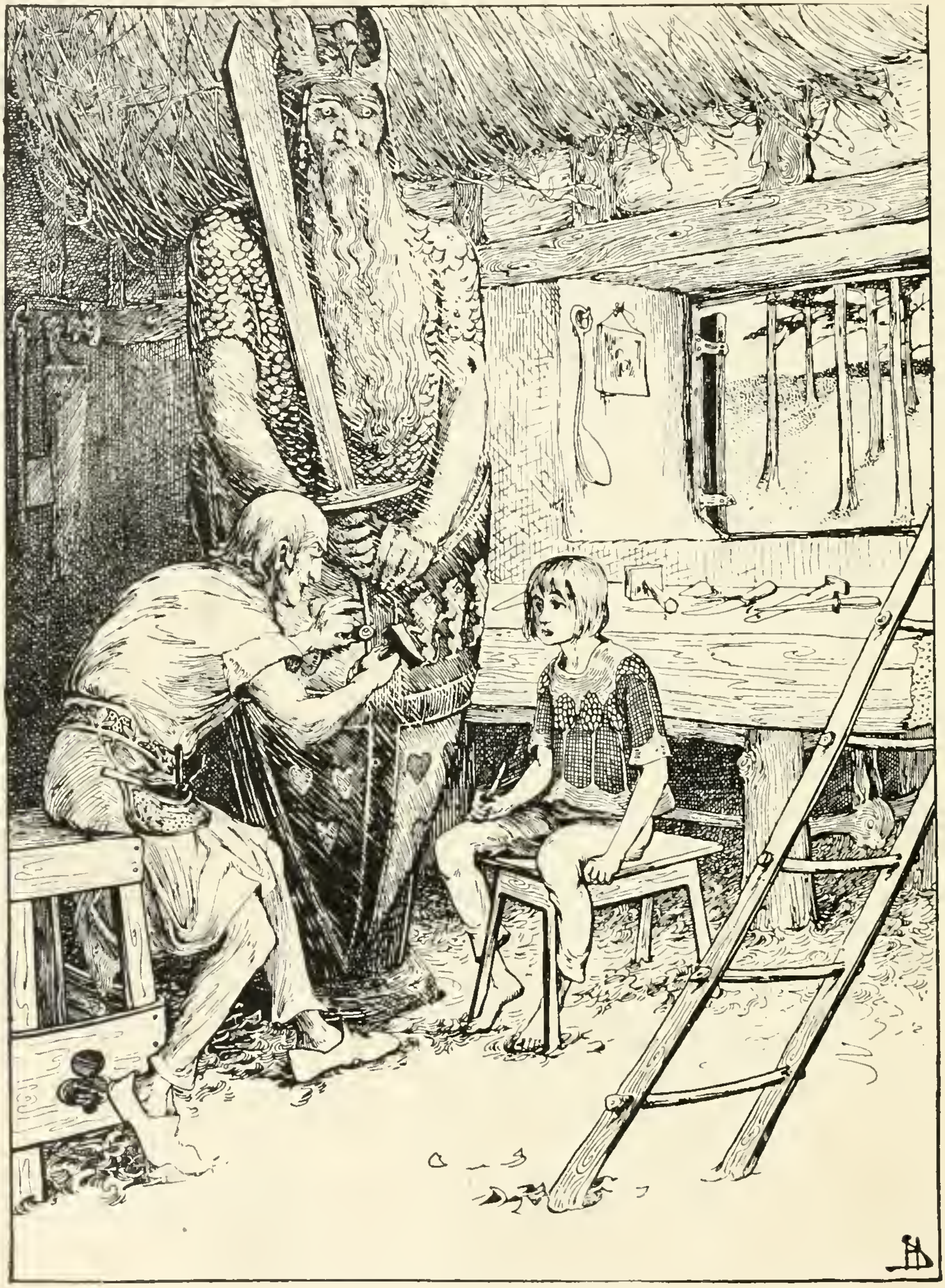
An old grandfather sat telling all these particulars about Holger Danske to his little grandson; and the little boy knew that what his grandfather said was true. And as the old man sat talking, he was carving a large wooden figure representing Holger Danske, which was to ornament the prow of a vessel; for the old grandfather was a carver of images, whose trade it was to make figures for ship-heads, according as each ship might be named; and, in the present case, he had carved Holger Danske, who stood proud and erect, with his long beard, holding in one hand his broad battle-sword, while he supported himself with the other against the Danish coat-of-arms.

And the old grandfather related so many histories about distinguised Danish men and women that at length his little grandson fancied that he knew as much as Holger Danske himself, who only dreams about things; and when the little fellow went to bed, he kept thinking and thinking, till he pressed his chin against the counterpane, and then imagined that he had a long beard that became rooted to it.

But the old grandfather still sat at his work, carving the last portion of it, namely,—the Danish arms. At last he completed them, and then looked at the whole, and thought over all he had read and heard, and what he had related that evening to the little boy; and he nodded his head, wiped his spectacles, put them on again, and said: "Ay, Holger Danske won't make his appearance in my lifetime, but that boy in bed there will perhaps be able to see him, and will be present when it really comes to pass." And the old grandfather nodded again; and the more he looked at his Holger Danske, the more obvious it was to him that he had carved a good figure,—nay, it even seemed to him as if it assumed the colour of life, and as if the armour glittered like iron and steel: the nine hearts in the Danish arms seemed redder and redder, while the lions, with their gold crowns on their heads, were actually leaping.

"They are certainly the finest arms in the world," said the old man. "The lions stand for strength, and the hearts for mercy and love." And he gazed at the uppermost lion, and thought of King Knut, who chained illustrious England to the Danish throne; and he looked at the second lion, and thought of Waldemar, who united Denmark, and conquered the Vandal states.

Then he looked at the third lion, and thought of Margaret, who was the bond of union between Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. But while he was gazing at the red hearts, they glowed yet more brightly than before, and became flames that moved, and his mind followed each of them in turn.



AS THE OLD MAN SAT TALKING, HE WAS CARVING A LARGE WOODEN FIGURE REPRESENTING HOLGER DANSKE.

The first flame led him into a dark and narrow prison, where sat captive a beautiful woman, Eleonor Ulfeld,* daughter to Christian IV.; and the flame alighted on her bosom like a rose, and bloomed, and seemed to make one with the heart of the best and noblest of all Danish women.

"Ay, that is, indeed, a heart in Denmark's arms," said the old grandfather.

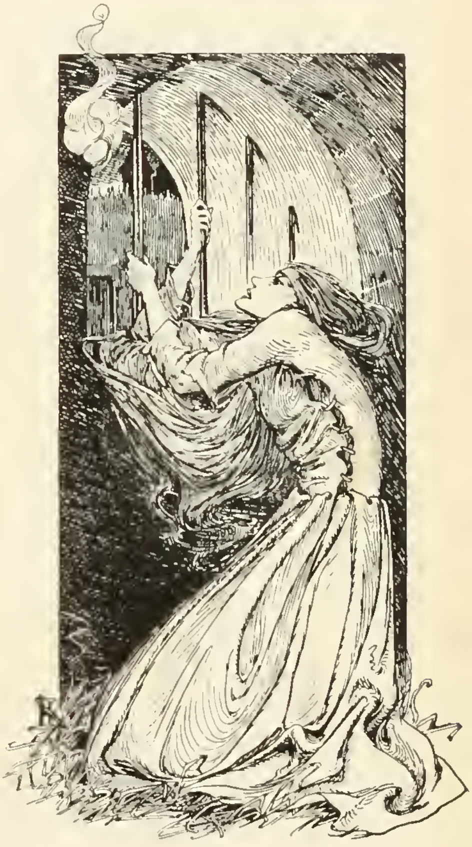
And his spirit followed the second flame, that carried him out to sea, where cannons were roaring, and ships lay wrapped in smoke; and the flame shaped itself into the ribbon of an order on Hvitfeldt's breast, as he blew up himself and his ship, in order to save the whole fleet.†

And the third flame led him to Greenland's miserable huts, where the missionary, Hans Egede,‡ held his sway by words and deeds of Christian love. The flame that was a star on his breast became one of the hearts in the Danish arms.

And the old grandfather's spirit followed the hovering flame, for his spirit knew whither it was about to lead him. In a peasant woman's poverty-stricken room stood Frederick VI., writing his name, in chalk, upon a beam; § the flame was flickering on his breast and in his heart, and it was in the peasant's house that his heart became one of the hearts in the Danish coat-of-arms. And the old grandfather wiped his eyes, for he had known King Frederick, with his silvery locks and his honest blue eyes, and had lived under him; and he clasped his hands, and gazed stedfastly before him. The old grandfather's daughter-in-law then came to remind him that it was late, that he ought to take some rest, and that supper was ready.

"But what you have carved is very fine, grandfather," said she; "Holger Danske, and our complete old coat-of-arms! It seems to me as if I had seen that face before."

"No, you can't have seen it," said the old grandfather; "but I have, and I have endeavoured to carve it in wood, such as it remained impressed on my memory. A long time ago, when the English fleet lay in the roadstead, and when we showed, on the memorable second of April,|| that we were true ancient Danes, I was on the deck of the *Denmark*, for I served in Steen Billes' squadron, and there I stood beside a man, whom the very cannon-balls seemed to be afraid of. He sang old ditties in a cheerful voice, and fired and fought as if he were something more than a human being. I still recollect his countenance, but whence he came, or whither he went, neither I nor anybody else ever knew. I have often thought it might be old Holger Danske himself, who had swam down to us from Kronenburg to help us in the hour of danger. That was my notion and there is his likeness."



THE FIRST FLAME LED HIM INTO A DARK AND NARROW PRISON, WHERE SAT CAPTIVE A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.

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* This highly gifted princess (wife of the Corfitz Ulfeld, who was accused of betraying his country), whose only crime was her faithful attachment to her unfortunate husband, languished for twenty-two years in an abominable dungeon, till her persecutor, Queen Sophia Amelia, was dead.

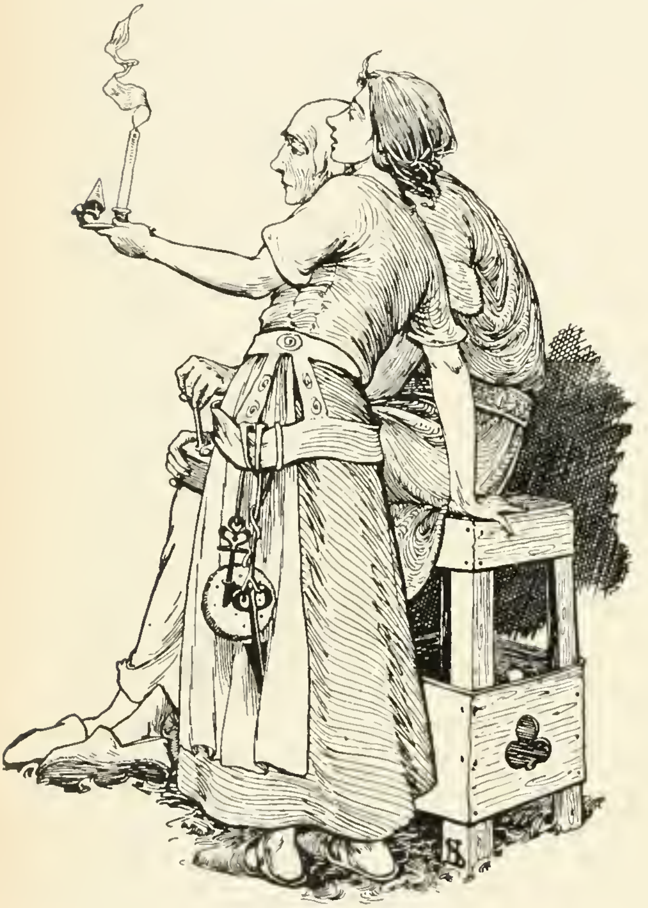
† In the naval battle in the Kjöge Gulf, between the Danes and Swedes, in 1710, Hvitfeldt's ship, the *Danebrog*, caught fire. In order to save the town of Kjöge and the Danish fleet from the flames of his ship, which was driven towards them by the wind, he blew up his vessel with himself and the whole crew.

‡ Hans Egede went to Greenland in 1721, where he followed his calling during fifteen years, amidst incredible privations and hardships. Not only did he spread the lights of Christianity, but was himself a pattern of the noblest Christian virtues.

§ During a journey to the western coast of Jutland, the king visited a poor woman, who, on his leaving her house, ran after him to request him to write his name on a beam; the king accordingly turned back and complied with her wish. Through the whole course of his life he displayed a great anxiety to better the condition of the peasantry. Hence it was that Danish peasants begged for the privilege of carrying his coffin to its last resting-place, in the royal vault at Roeskilde, a distance of four miles from Copenhagen.

|| It was on the 2nd April, 1801, that this bloody naval battle took place between the Danes and the English, under Parker and Nelson.

The wooden image cast its giant shadow upon the wall, and even on a part of the ceiling. It seemed to be the real Holger Danske himself standing there; for the shadow moved, though it might only be the flickering light of the lamp that caused such an illusion. And his daughter-in-law kissed the old grandfather, and led him to the great arm-chair before the table; and she and her husband, the son of the old grandfather, and father to the little boy who lay in bed, supped with him, while the old man descanted upon the Danish lions and the Danish hearts, the emblems of strength and mercy, and expounded very clearly that there was another kind of strength, that lay not in the sword, and pointed to a shelf containing some old books, amongst which might be found a complete set of Holberg's comedies, that have been so much read, because they are so amusing, and one can fancy one recognises all the characters of bygone ages delineated in their pages.



"BUT WHAT YOU HAVE CARVED IS VERY FINE, GRANDFATHER," SAID SHE.

"You see, he, too, knew how to fight," said the old grandfather; "he scourged people's follies and failings as long as he could." And the grandfather nodded in the direction of the looking-glass, near which stood an almanack with a print of the round tower,* saying: "Tycho Brahe was another of those who used the sword not to hack and hew flesh, but to clear a simpler road between all the stars in heaven. And then he, whose father belonged to my craft—he, the son of the old image-carver—he, whom we have ourselves seen, with his white locks and broad shoulders, and whose name is celebrated throughout all the lands of the world—ay, he is a sculptor, while I am only an image-carver! Yes; Holger Danske can come in many shapes, so that Denmark's strength shall be manifest through all the lands of the earth. Now, shall we drink Bertel's † health?"

But the little boy in bed saw old Kronenburg and the Sound of Elsinore quite plainly, and the real Holger Danske, who sat below in the cellar, with his beard rooted to the table, dreaming of all that happens up above here. Holger Danske likewise dreamed of the humble little room where sat the carver of images: he heard the conversation that took place, and nodded in his dream, saying: "Ay, do but remember me, you Danish people! Bear me in your memory! I will come in the hour of need!"

And the bright daylight now shone outside Kronenburg, and the wind bore the sound of the huntsmen's bugles from the neighbouring land. The ships sailed past, and saluted the fortress—"Boom! boom!" And Kronenburg answered, "Boom! boom!" But Holger Danske did not wake, loud as the cannons had roared; for they meant nothing but—"Good-morning!" and "Your servant!" They must fire in another sort of manner before he awakes; but wake he will, if necessary, for there is plenty of strength yet in Holger Danske.

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* The astronomical observatory in Copenhagen.

† Bertel Thorwaldsen.

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The Fir-Tree

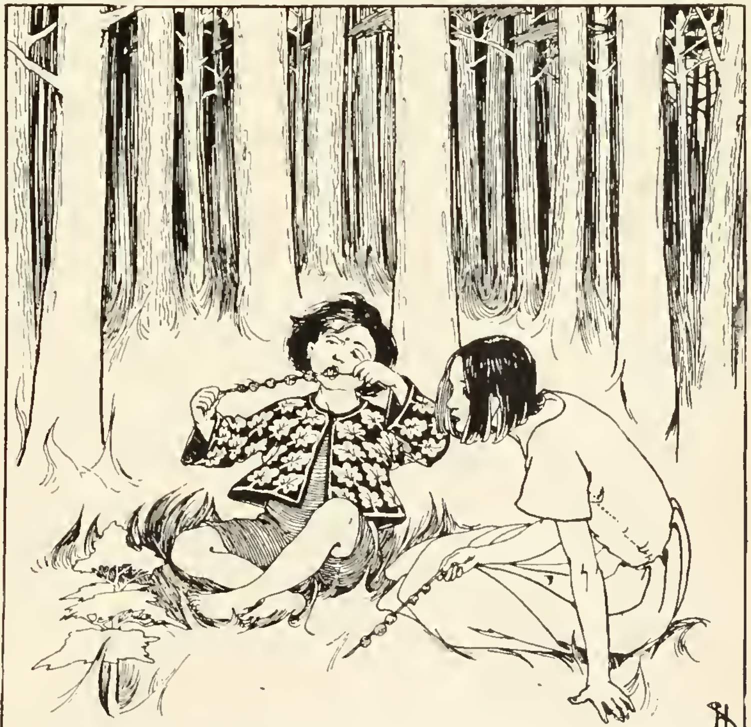
ONCE upon a time, there stood in the depths of a forest a pretty little fir-tree. It was placed very nicely, for it could get as much sunshine and air as it wanted, and it was surrounded by a number of taller companions, both firs and pines. But the little fir-tree did so long to grow taller! It thought nothing of the warm sun and the fresh air, and cared still less for the peasant children who strolled about and chattered, whenever they came to gather wild strawberries and raspberries. They would often bring a pipkin full of berries, or lay them out on a handful of straw, and then seat themselves near the little fir-tree, saying: "Well, this is a sweet little tree!" But the tree was quite insensible to any such praise.

In the following year it had grown a notch taller, and the year after it was taller still by another notch; for with fir-trees it is easy to ascertain, by the number of notches, how many years old they are.

"Oh! how I wish I were as tall as the other trees!" sighed the diminutive fir; "and then I should spread my branches all around, and my top would overlook the wide world. Birds would then build nests in my branches, and when the wind blew I should be able to bow with as much dignity as the rest of my companions."

It took no delight in the sunshine, or the birds, or the rosy clouds that sailed over its head morning and evening. When it was winter, and the white snow lay in dazzling sheets upon the ground, a hare would frequently jump right over the little tree, and that vexed it so sorely! But after two more winters, the tree had grown so tall, that by the time it had reached the third, the hare was obliged to run beside it. "Oh! could I but grow and grow, and become tall and old! That is the only thing worth caring for in this world," thought the tree.

In the autumn the woodcutters always came and felled several of the tallest trees. As this happened regularly every year, the young fir-tree, who was now grown up, shuddered at the fate that perhaps awaited him; for the fine large trees fell with a loud crashing and creaking to the ground. Their branches were lopped off, and the trunks looked so naked, so lank, and so narrow, that they were scarcely to be re-



THEY WOULD OFTEN BRING A PIPKIN FULL OF BERRIES . . . AND SEAT THEMSELVES NEAR THE LITTLE FIR-TREE, SAYING: "WELL, THIS IS A SWEET LITTLE TREE!"

cognised. Then they were placed on wagons, and the horses drew them out of the forest. Whither were they bound? What was to be their fate?

In spring, when the swallows and storks made their appearance, the tree inquired of them: "Do you know where they have been taken to? Did you not meet them?"

The swallows knew nothing of the matter; but the stork, after due reflection, nodded his head, saying: "Yes, I think I did; for I met a great many new ships as I flew out of Egypt, and the ships had very handsome masts; so I conclude that it must have been they, particularly as they smelt like firs. I congratulate you upon your friends; really, they are very shining characters."

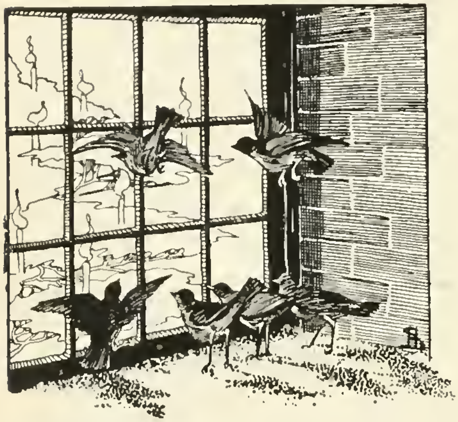
"Oh! were I but tall enough to cross the sea! What is this sea, and what does it look like?"

"Why, it would take too much time to explain," replied the stork, going away.

"Enjoy your youth," said the sunbeams; "enjoy your fresh growth, and your young existence, while it lasts."

And the wind kissed the tree, and the dew shed tears over it; but the fir-tree could not understand either of them.

When Christmas was drawing near, some very young trees were felled; several trees, indeed, that were neither so tall nor so old as this particular fir-tree, which could not rest for longing to get away from its native place. These young trees, that were chosen as being the prettiest of all, were not deprived of their branches, and were laid upon wagons, and taken away from the forest.



"WE KNOW—WE KNOW," TWITTERED THE SPARROWS, "FOR WE HAVE LOOKED IN AT THE WINDOWS IN YONDER TOWN!"

"Whither can they be going?" asked our fir-tree. "They are not taller than I am; on the contrary, there was one much smaller than myself. And why are they allowed to retain their branches? What is to be done with them?"

"We know—we know," twittered the sparrows, "for we have looked in at the windows in yonder town! We know what is to be done with them. Oh, they are raised to the very highest honours, I promise you! We saw through the windows how they were stuck up in a warm room, and ornamented with a host of fine things, such as gilt apples, gingerbread, and playthings, besides hundreds of tapers."

"And then—" asked the fir-tree with trembling eagerness—"and then—what next?"

"Why, we saw nothing further—but it was an incomparable sight!"

"I wonder whether I am destined to so brilliant a career!" exclaimed the fir-tree, in ecstasy. "That is even better than crossing the seas. How I do long for Christmas to come round again! I am now grown as tall as the others that were taken away last year. Oh, how I wish I were already placed on the wagon! How I wish I were in the warm room with all the fine things about me! And then—why, surely something still better must be in store, something far finer still, or else they would not deck me out so smartly! There must be something much grander and more magnificent yet to come—only what can it be? Oh! I am so weary with longing—I can't tell how I feel!"

"Enjoy our gifts," said the air and the sunbeams; "enjoy your bright young days in the open air."

But the tree would not enjoy himself, and kept growing and growing. Through both winter and summer he stood clothed in dark green, and all who saw him said, "That is a beautiful tree." So towards Christmas he was felled before any of the others. The axe clove right through his pith, and down he fell with a groan; it was like a pang, or a fainting fit, and the tree ceased to think of the honours that awaited him, in his affliction at leaving his home and the spot where he had grown into beauty; for he knew but too well that he would never see his old companions again, nor the little rushes and flowers that once surrounded him; nor, perhaps, even the birds. Moreover, the journey was far from pleasant.

The tree revived a little when he was unpacked, together with the other trees, in a courtyard, and he heard a man observe: "This is a beauty. We only want one."

Two well-dressed servants now came and carried off the fir-tree to a fine, large room. The walls were adorned with pictures, and beside the earthenware stove stood large china vases, with lions on their lids; and there were rocking-chairs, silk sofas, large tables loaded with books full of prints, and playthings, to the amount of a hundred times a hundred dollars—at least, so said the children. The fir-tree was placed in a large barrel filled with sand; but nobody could perceive it was a barrel, as it was covered round with green baize and stood on a handsome carpet. Oh! how the tree quaked!

What was going to be done? Both the servants and the young ladies helped to adorn it. On one branch they hung little nets cut out of coloured paper, and each net was filled with sweetmeats; gilt apples and walnuts hung down from others, as if they had grown there; and above a hundred tapers—white, blue, and red—were fastened to the branches. Beneath the green leaves were placed dolls, that looked, for all the world, like living creatures. The tree had never seen any such before; and on the topmost summit was fastened a star, all over spangles, that was right royally splendid to behold.

"This evening it will shine most gloriously!" they all said.

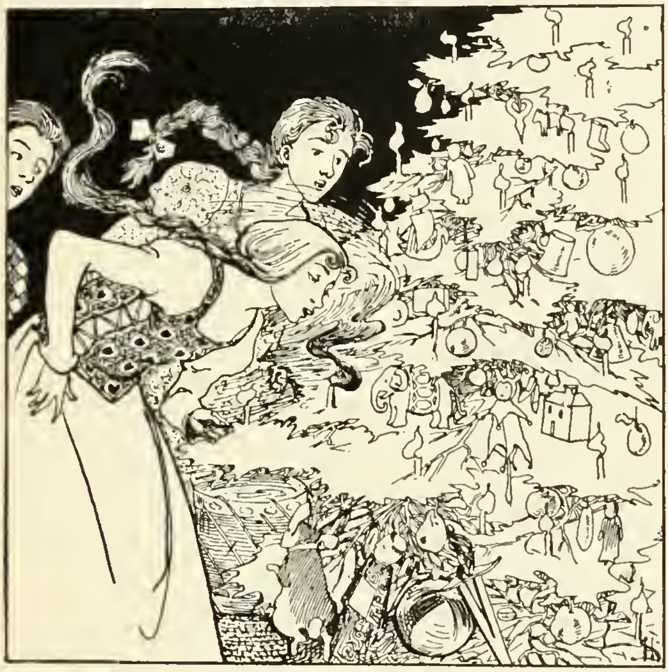
"Oh!" thought the tree, "if it were but evening! If the tapers could but be lighted! And then what is to be done next? I wonder whether the trees from our forest will come and admire me? And whether the sparrows will peep in through the window-panes? And whether I have taken root here, and shall remain decked out in this fashion through both winter and summer?"

These reflections were all very well, only the tree's longings were so intense, that his bark ached again through impatience; and *barkache* is just as bad for a tree as headache is with us.

At length the tapers were lit; and a grand sight it was, to be sure. The tree trembled so in all his branches, that one of the tapers set fire to the leaves and regularly singed them.

"Help! help!" shrieked the young ladies, as they hastily extinguished the flame.

So the tree endeavoured not to tremble again, frightened as he was—for he was most anxious not to lose any of his ornaments — and though bewildered by so brilliant a scene. And now the folding-doors were thrown open, and in rushed a whole troop of children, as though they would overturn the tree, while their elders followed in a more leisurely manner. The little ones stood dumb-struck for a moment, and then directly after set up such shouts of joy that the room rang with the sound. They danced round the tree, and one present after another was plucked off from its branches.



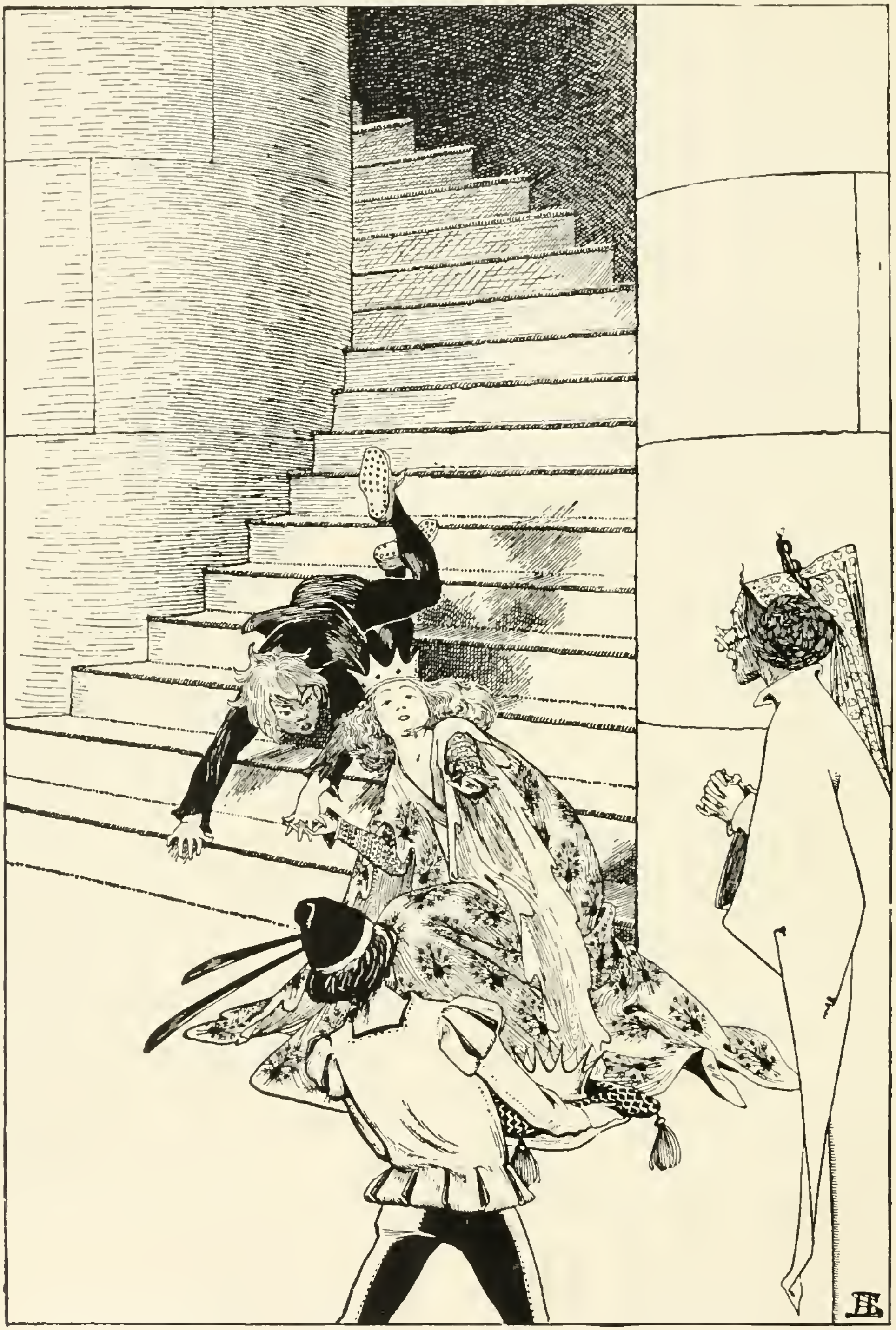
AT LENGTH THE TAPERS WERE LIT; AND A GRAND SIGHT IT WAS, TO BE SURE.

"What are they about?" thought the tree. "What will come next?" And as each taper burnt down to the branches, it was put out, and then the children had leave given them to rifle the tree. Oh, how they did set upon it, to be sure! And how its branches cracked! Had it not been fastened by the gold star at the top to the ceiling, it would have been overturned to a certainty.

The children danced about with their pretty toys, and nobody took any further notice of the tree, except the old nurse, who came and rummaged amongst the branches to see if a fig or an apple had not been left there by chance.

"A story! let's have a story!" cried the children, pulling a little thick-set man towards the tree, under which he took his seat, saying—"Now we are in the shade, and of course the tree will reap great advantage by listening to what we say. But, mind! I shall only tell one story, so which shall it be? Ivede-Avede, or Humpty-Dumpty, who fell downstairs, and yet was raised to high honours, and obtained the princess's hand?"

"Ivede-Avede!" cried some. "Humpty-Dumpty!" cried others. And a fine screaming and squalling there was! The fir-tree alone was silent, though he said to himself—"Am I not to have a finger in the pie?" For he had played his part as well as anybody else that evening.

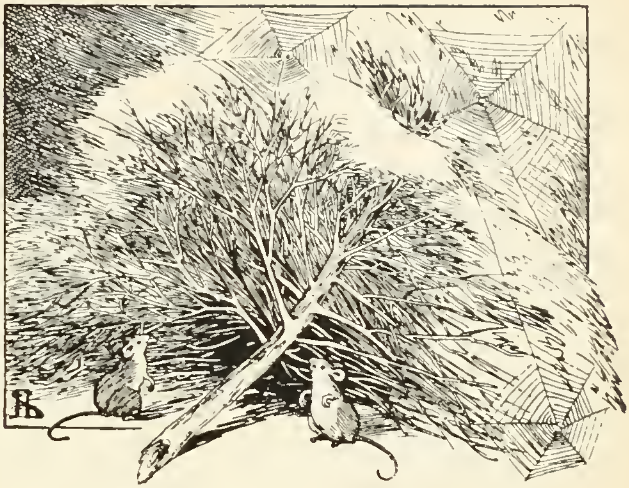


TOLD THE STORY OF HUMPTY-DUMPTY WHO FELL DOWNSTAIRS, AND YET WAS RAISED TO HIGH HONOURS AND OBTAINED THE PRINCESS'S HAND.

And the man told the story of Humpty-Dumpty, who fell downstairs, and yet was raised to high honours, and obtained the princess's hand. And the children clapped their hands and cried: "Go on! go on!" for they wanted to hear the story of Ivede-Avede besides; but they only got Humpty-Dumpty. The fir-tree stood in pensive silence. The birds in the wood had never told him anything of the kind.

"Humpty-Dumpty fell downstairs, and yet obtained a princess! Yes, yes! that's the way of the world," argued the fir-tree, thinking it must be a true story, because it was told by such a well-dressed man: "so who knows but what I may fall downstairs and obtain a princess?" And he rejoiced to think that next day he would again be decked out with tapers, playthings, gold, and fruit.

"To-morrow I will not tremble," thought the tree. "I will enjoy my grandeur. To-morrow I shall hear the story of Humpty-Dumpty again, and perhaps that of Ivede-Avede." And the tree remained silent and thoughtful throughout the whole night.



THE LITTLE MICE WERE FIT TO JUMP TO THE TOP OF THE TREE WITH DELIGHT.

Next morning the man-servant and the maid came in. "Now I'm going to be tricked out again in all my finery!" thought the tree. But they dragged him out of the room, and upstairs, and then flung him on the floor in a dark corner, where daylight never shone. "What's the meaning of this?" thought the tree. "What shall I do here? And what can I hear in such a place?" And he leaned against the wall, still thinking and thinking. And he had plenty of time for reflection, as days and nights passed by, and nobody came up; and when at length somebody did come, it was only to stow away some large chests in the corner. So the tree was now as completely concealed as though his existence had been entirely forgotten.

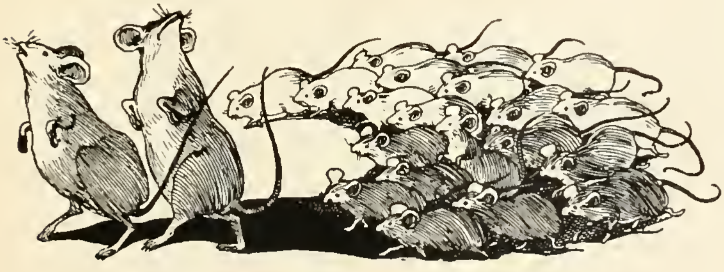
"It is winter abroad," thought the tree; "the ground must now be hard and covered with snow, so they can't plant me; therefore, I am to be kept safe here until spring. That is no bad plan. Really, people are very kind! I only wish it was not so dark, and so terribly lonely here! There's not even a little hare to enliven one! How nice it was to be in the forest when the snow was lying on the ground, and the hare used to jump past me—or even when he leaped over me, though I was not well pleased at the time, I remember. It is so dreadfully lonely up here!" "Peep! peep!" squeaked a little mouse, stealing forth, followed by another. They sniffed at the fir-tree, and then ensconced themselves between its branches.

"It is bitterly cold," said the little mice, "or else we should be very well off here—shouldn't we, you old fir-tree?"

"I'm not old," said the fir-tree; "there are many a great deal older than I."

"Where do you come from?" inquired the mice, "and what's your name?" for they were vastly curious. "Tell us something about the prettiest place in the world. Have you been there? Have you been in the store-room, where there is cheese lying on the shelves, and hams hanging to the ceiling; where one may dance upon tallow-candles, and whence one may come out twice as fat as one goes in?"

"I don't know of any such place," said the tree; "but I know of our forest, where the sun shines, and the birds sing." And then he related the story of his youth; and the mice, who had never heard the like before, listened very attentively, and then observed: "How much you have seen, and how happy you have been!"



"YOUR SERVANT," ANSWERED THE RATS, AND THEY RETURNED BACK TO THEIR OWN SET.

"I happy!" exclaimed the fir-tree; and then he thought over all he had told. "Well! those were, to be sure, rather pleasant times." And then he related all about Christmas-eve, and how he was decked out with cakes and tapers.

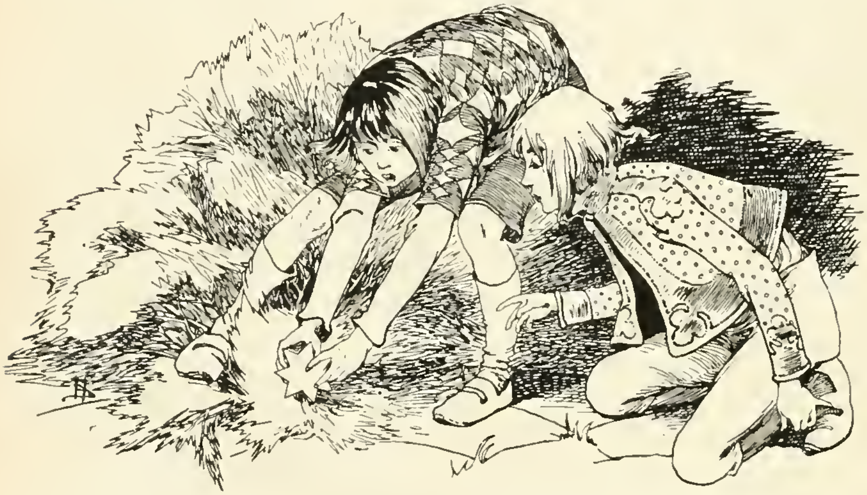
"Oh!" cried the little mouse, "how happy you have been, you old fir-tree!"

"I am not old," said the tree. "It's only this winter that I have come from the forest, and so I have been thrown back in my growth."

"What pretty things you do relate!" said the little mice. And the following night, they returned with four other little mice, that they might hear the tree tell his story; and the oftener he told it, the more distinctly he remembered everything; and he could not help thinking, "Those were right pleasant times, but they will not come over again. Still, as Humpty-Dumpty fell downstairs, and yet obtained the princess, perhaps I may still have a princess myself." And the fir-tree fondly recollected an elegant little birch that grew in the forest, and that was a beautiful princess for a fir-tree.

"Who is Humpty-Dumpty?" inquired the little mice.

The fir-tree then related the whole story, every word of which he remembered; and the little mice were fit to jump to the top of the tree with delight. Next night there came a great many more mice, and by Sunday they were joined by a couple of rats; but the latter said the story was not a pretty one, which vexed the little mice, because it made them think less of it themselves.



THE YOUNGEST RAN AND TORE OFF THE GOLD STAR. "SEE WHAT IS STICKING TO THE UGLY OLD FIR-TREE," SAID THE CHILD.

"Do you know nothing but this one story?" inquired the rats.

"Only this one," replied the tree. "I heard it on the happiest evening of my life. I did not think then how happy I was."

"It is a pitiful story any way. Don't you know any stories about lard or tallow? Can't you tell us some store-room tales?"

"No," said the tree.

"Your servant," answered the rats, and they returned back to their own set.

The little mice finished by staying away likewise, and then the tree said, with a sigh, "It was very nice when those sympathizing little mice used to sit all round me, and listen to my story. Now that is over too. But I shall think of those times, and enjoy the recollection of them, when I shall be removed once more from this place."

But what, think you, happened? Why, one morning there came some people, who made a great to-do upon the floor; the chests were shoved aside, and the tree was drawn forth. It's true they flung it somewhat roughly on the floor; but a servant immediately dragged it towards the stairs, on which shone the daylight.

"Now I am going to begin life anew," thought the tree, as he felt the fresh air and the welcome sunbeams on reaching the court below. It was all done so fast, that the tree forgot entirely to think of himself; besides, there was so much to be seen all about him. The court led to a garden, where everything was in full bloom. The roses hung over the little trellis, and looked so fresh, and smelt so sweet; while the lime-trees were in blossom, and the swallows were flying about, saying, "Twit—twit—twit—my mate is coming.' But it was not the fir-tree they meant.

"Now I shall really live!" cried the latter, rejoicing and spreading out his branches, that were, alas! all withered and yellow; and there he lay in a corner amongst weeds and nettles. The gilt-paper star was still stuck in the top of the tree, and sparkled in the bright sunshine.

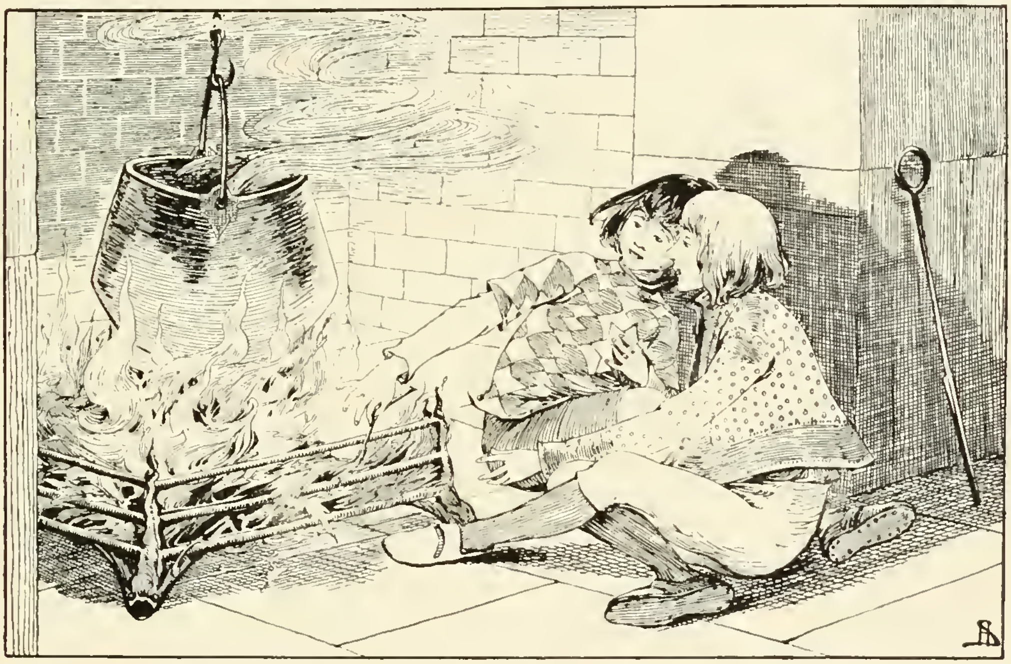
Two of the lively children, who had danced round the tree and taken such delight in it at Christmas, happened to be playing in the court. The youngest ran and tore off the gold star.

"See what is still sticking to the ugly old fir-tree," said the child, as he trampled on the branches till they cracked beneath his boots.

And the tree looked upon the blooming flower-garden, and then thought of himself, and wished he had been left in his dark corner on the floor. He recalled his early youth in the forest, the merry Christmas-evening, and the little mice who were so pleased at hearing the story of Humpty-Dumpty.

"It's all gone and past," said the old tree. "Would that I had known my own happiness while it lasted! It's past—past for ever!"

A lad now came and chopped the tree into small fagots, which were then made into a bundle. It now burned up briskly under a large brewing-copper, and the tree sighed so deeply that every sigh was like a little pistol-shot. So the children left off playing, and came and sat near the fire, and looked at it, saying, "Pop—pop!" But at every pop—which was a deep sigh—the tree was thinking of some summer's day in the forest, or of some winter's night when the stars shone brightly; he thought, too, of Christmas, and of Humpty-Dumpty, the only story he had ever heard, or knew how to tell; and then the tree was burnt to ashes.

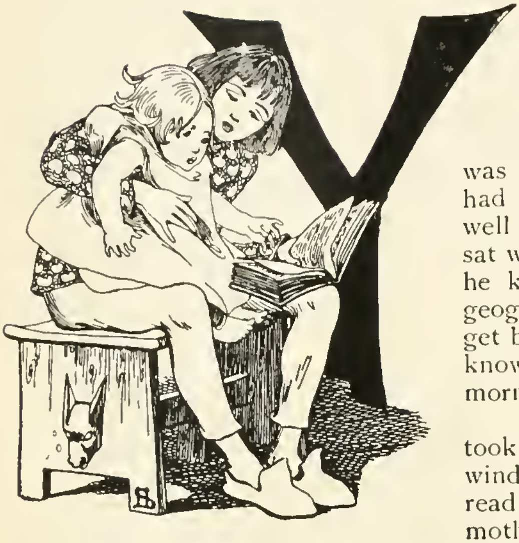


SO THE CHILDREN LEFT OFF PLAYING, AND CAME AND SAT NEAR THE FIRE, AND LOOKED AT IT, SAYING, "POP! POP!"

The boys played in the garden, and the youngest wore upon his breast the gilt star that the tree had worn on its happiest evening, which was long since over, as all was over with the tree, and must now be with the story; for all stories must finish at last.

* * *

Little Tuk



YES, he was called Little Tuk—not that it was really his name, but he called himself so before he could speak plainly ; he meant it for Charles, and it was all very well when one did but know it. Little Tuk was left to take care of his sister Gustave, who was much younger than himself ; and at the same time he had to learn his lesson, only the two things could not very well be carried on simultaneously. The poor little fellow sat with his sister on his knee, and sang her all the songs he knew, while ever and anon he gave a look at his geography-book that lay open before him ; for he had to get by heart the names of all the towns in Zealand, and to know all that could be known about them by the next morning.

His mother, who had been out, now came home, and took little Gustave in her arms ; then Tuk ran to the window, and read and read so zealously, that he nearly read his eyes out, for it grew darker and darker ; and his mother had no money to buy a light.

"There goes the old washerwoman, opposite, down the street," said the mother, looking out of window. "The poor woman can hardly drag herself along ; and now she has to drag a bucket from the well into the bargain. Now, do just step over, Tuk, and help the old woman, there's a good boy."

And Tuk ran off and helped her ; but when he returned it was quite dark in the room, and as there was no talk about having a candle, he was obliged to go to bed, and he lay in his old crib thinking of his geography lesson, and of Zealand, and of all the things his schoolmaster had told him. He need have read a good deal more, but this he could not do. So he placed the geography-book under his bolster, because he had heard that it was a great help towards learning one's lessons—though it must not be too much depended upon.

There he lay thinking and thinking—when it suddenly seemed to him as if some one kissed him on his mouth and eyes.

He was asleep, and yet he was not ; it was as if the old washerwoman looked at him with her mild eyes, saying : "It would be a sin, indeed, if you did not know your lesson early to-morrow morning ! You helped me, and now I will help you, and the Almighty will always befriend you."

And the book began to move about like a live thing under Tuk's bolster.

"Cluck ! cluck ! cluck !" said a hen, creeping out of it, "I am a Kiöge hen." And then she told all about the little town of Kiöge, how many inhabitants it numbered ; besides relating the battle that had taken place there between the English and the Danes, though it was scarcely worth mentioning.

Scratch ! scratch ! and down fell something with a heavy lump ! It was a wooden bird,—the popinjay used as a shooting-mark at Prästöe. He had reckoned that the number of its inhabitants was equal to the nails in his body ; so he was very proud. "Thorwaldsen lived close to me," said he ; "and—lump !—here am I, all safe and sound !"

And now Little Tuk ceased to be lying down, and found himself on a horse.

Gallop ! gallop ! Away he went. A richly dressed warrior in a helmet with waving plume, held him before him on his horse, and they rode through the wood to the old city of Vordingborg ; and a large, animated town it was : stately turrets surmounted the royal castle, and lights gleamed from all its windows ; the sounds of music and dancing were heard from within, and King Waldemar was dancing with the richly-attired young ladies of his court.

Morning now dawned, and, with the rising sun, the whole town and the royal castle sank to ruins—one turret falling after another, till only one remained standing on the hill where the castle formerly reared its head ; and the town had shrunk to such poverty and insignificance, that the schoolboys came with their books under their arms, saying: "Two thousand inhabitants"; and even this was a boast, for there were not anything like so many.

And Little Tuk lay in his bed; he seemed to be dreaming, and yet not dreaming. But some one seemed close by him.

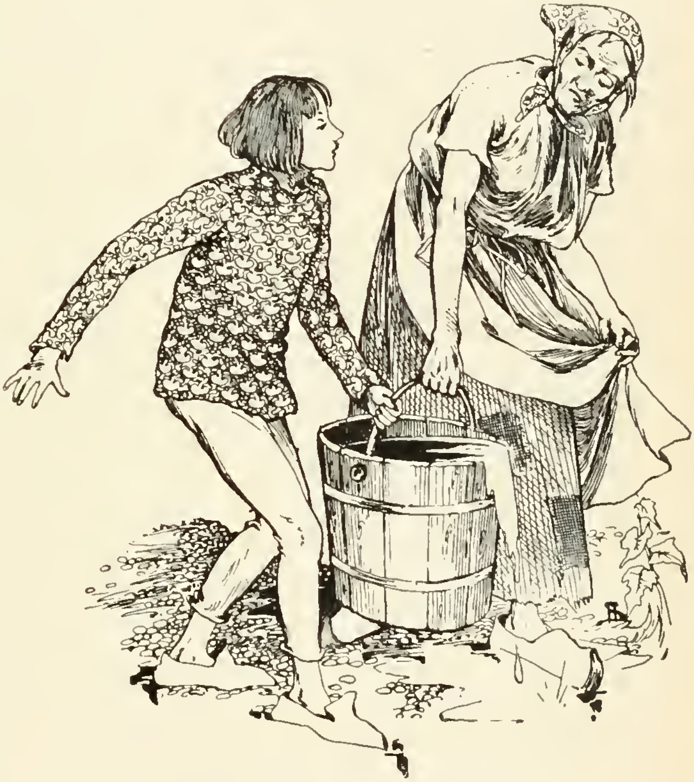
"Little Tukky! Little Tukky!" said a voice that proceeded from a seaman, quite a little fellow, no bigger than a middy, though he was not one—"I bring you greetings from Corsör. It is a rising town, and a very lively one, possessing both steamers and stage coaches. People used to call it an ugly and tiresome place; because, formerly, travellers had to wait in its port for a favourable wind, before the introduction of steamers; but now, it no longer deserves such an epithet.

"'I am situated on the coast,' said Corsör, 'but I have roads, and pleasure-gardens; and I have given birth to a poet, both witty and entertaining, which all are not. I once formed the project of fitting out a ship to sail round the world, but I did not carry it out, though I could have done so; and besides all the rest, I am fragrant with perfume; for the loveliest roses bloom outside my gates.'"

Little Tuk looked before him, and saw a mass of red and green; but when the confusion of colours had somewhat subsided, he perceived it was a cliff, near the bay, all overgrown with roses; at the top of which towered a fine old church with a couple of high Gothic turrets. Large streams of water sprang from the cliff, and close by sat an aged king with a gold crown on his white hair; this was King Hroar-o'-the-Streams, near which stands the town of Roeskilde, as it is now called. And all the kings and queens of Denmark, with all their gold crowns on their heads, went hand-in-hand into the old church, while the organ was playing, and the streams were flowing. For nearly all the sovereigns of Denmark lie buried in this beautiful church.

Little Tuk saw and heard everything that was passing. "Do not forget the provinces," said King Hroar.

Then all vanished—though where it went to, he knew not; but it was just as if the leaf of a book had been turned over.


AND TUK RAN OFF AND HELPED HER.

And now there stood before him an old peasant woman, from Soröe, a quiet little town, where grass grows in the market-place. Her head and shoulders were covered with a gray linen apron that was as wet as if it had been drenched by the rain.

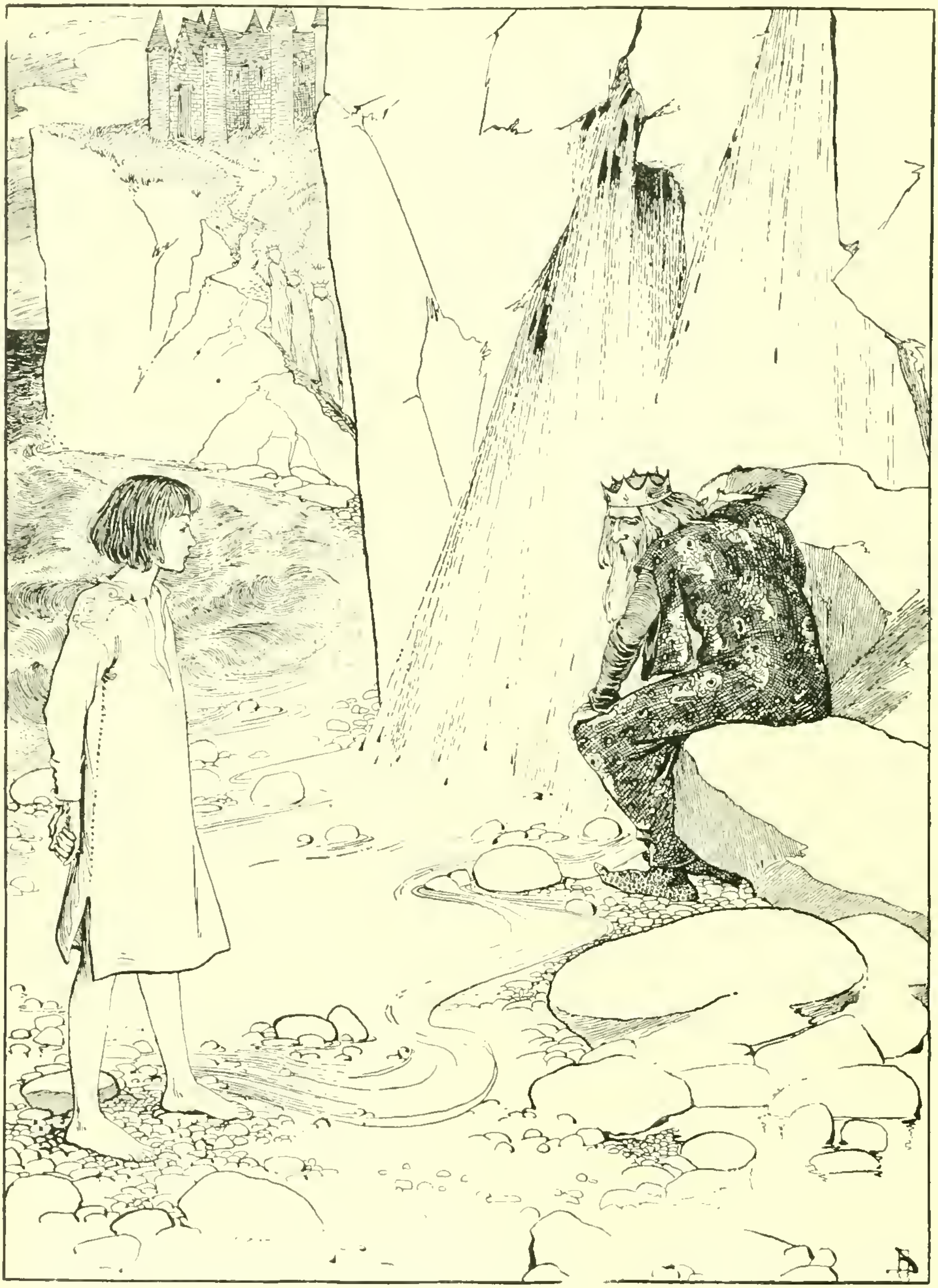
"And so it has," said she. And she told a great many interesting things, from Holberg's comedies, and about Waldemar and Absalon. For Holberg had founded a military academy in her native town.

On a sudden, however, she shrivelled up, and wagged her head as if she were going to take a leap. "Croak!" quoth she, "it is wet—it is wet; and it is as comfortably still as the grave in Soröe." And she at once became a frog. "Croak!" cried she, and again she changed to an old woman.

"One must dress according to the weather," said she. "It is wet—it is wet. My native place is like a bottle—one must come in at the corking, and go out at the corking. Formerly we had the finest fish; and now we have healthy, rosy-cheeked brats at the bottom of the bottle, and they learn philosophy, Greek and Hebrew. Croak!"

It sounded exactly as if frogs were squeaking, or as if somebody was walking over a swamp with heavy boots; her tone was so monotonous and so tiresome, that Little Tukky fell fast asleep, which was the best thing for him.

But even in this sleep there came a dream, or whatever else it may be called. His little sister Gustave, with her blue eyes and flaxen ringlets, had suddenly grown into a tall and beautiful girl,



LARGE STREAMS OF WATER SPRANG FROM THE CLIFF, AND CLOSE BY SAT AN AGED KING WITH A GOLDEN CROWN ON HIS WHITE HAIR.

who could fly, though she had no wings; and they now flew over Zealand, and over the green forests, and across the blue sea.

"Do you hear the cock crowing, Little Tukky? Cock-a-doodle-doo! The hens are flying hither from Kiöge! And you shall have a farmyard, such a large one too! you shall never know hunger nor want! And the golden goose shall be yours, and you shall become a rich and happy man. Your house shall rise like King Waldemar's tower, and be richly adorned with marble pillars, like those that come from Prästöe. You understand me. Your name shall travel round the earth like the ship that was to sail from Corsör, and in Roeskilde——"

"Do not forget the provinces!" said King Hroar—"and there will you speak wisely and well, Little Tukky; and when at length you sink into your grave, you will sleep in peace——"

"As if I lay in Soröe," interrupted Tuk, and then he awoke.

It was a bright morning, and he could not recollect his dream. But it was not necessary he should; for one has no need of knowing that which one will live to see.

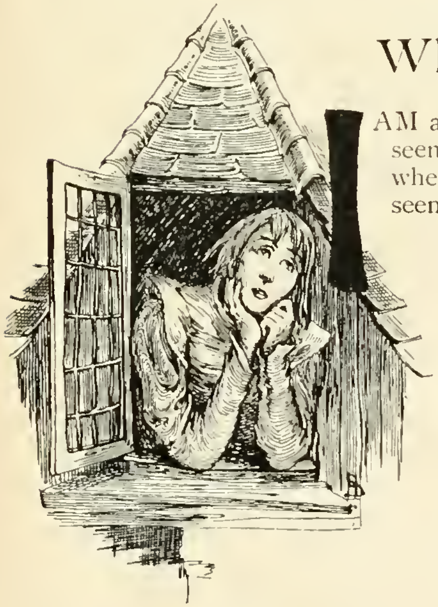
And he now jumped out of bed, and read his book, and immediately knew his whole lesson by heart.

And the old washerwoman popped her head in at the door, and said with a friendly nod: "Thank you, my good boy for your kind help. May the Lord fulfil your brightest dreams!"

Little Tukky no longer knew what he had dreamt; but the Almighty did.

* * *

What the Moon Saw

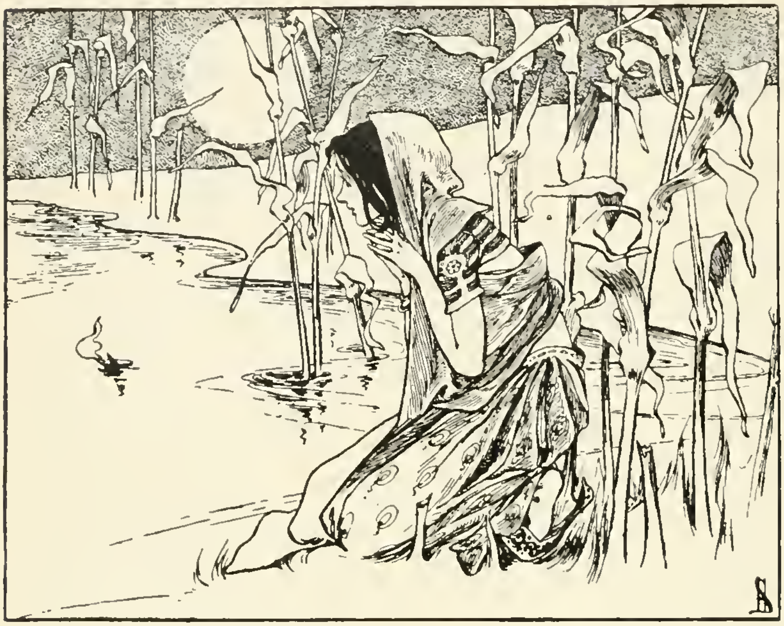


I AM an artist, as my own eyes tell me, and as those admit who have seen the creations of my fancy. But here is a strange thing. Just when my feelings are deepest and fullest, hands and tongue alike seem languid, and my thoughts refuse to shape themselves either in words or in pictures.

Young I am, and poor I am, and I live in a little narrow street. Not that I want for light, for my room is the attic, with a glorious view of roofs and gables. After I came to live in the city I was depressed and lonely at first as one could be. Hitherto I had had forest and hill to look at: here only a thicket of chimney-stacks! Not a friend, not even a face I knew! So it was gloomily enough that I was sitting one night at my window, and gloomily, by-and-by, I opened it and looked out. My heart just leapt! A friendly face at last—a round, pleasant face, the face of an old home-friend! There was the Moon looking in at me, not a bit changed, with just the same countenance that I had often seen peeping at me through the trees that line the moor. I kissed my hand to her, as she cast her beams right into my garret, and in return she promised to give me a glance, though a brief one, every night that she was out. And every night possible she has come since then, though for only a few moments, I am sorry to say, and every visit she has told me of something or other seen by her that night or before. If I did what she told me, she said, and let my pencil draw the scenes she described for me, I should have a delightful sketch-book, and so I have; why, I could make another "Arabian Nights" out of them, if the number were not too great. Evening after evening I have put down the Moon's stories, and those here given are just as they were told me. Some genius in painting or poetry or music may make works of art out of them if he will. These are only the outlines, rough jottings with my own thoughts cropping up every now and then, the evenings when the Moon did not visit me.

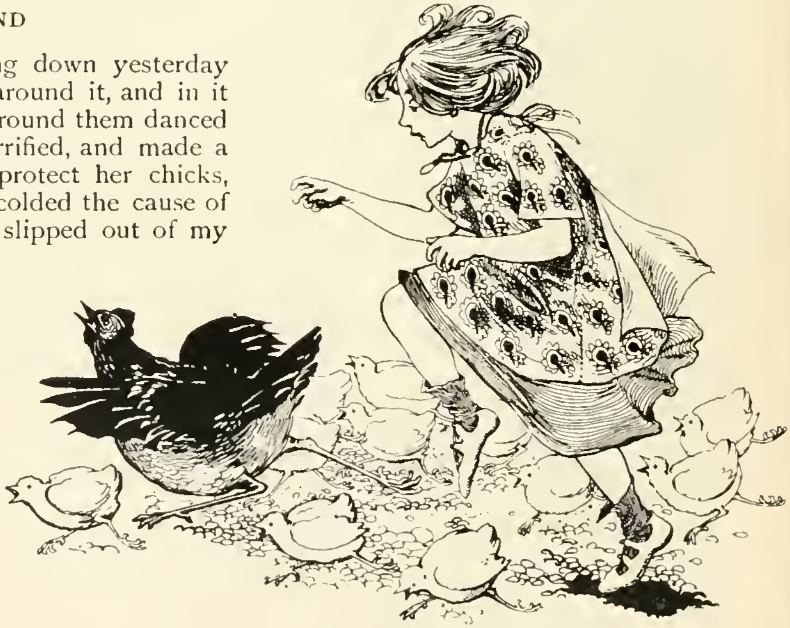
Night the First

"Last night," said the Moon, "I was gliding through the cloudless eastern sky. The waters of Ganges mirrored my orb; my light struggled to find a way through the dense leafage of the banana, curved like the plates of a tortoise. A Hindoo girl stole from the grove, her step like the gazelle's, her beauty like Eve's. A dream is not more vanishing, more elusive and ethereal, than was this eastern maiden, and yet she was clear to see against the background of shade. The purpose of her coming shone in her delicate features. Swiftly she pressed on, despite the thorny tangle that tore her shoes. The deer that was quenching his thirst at the river-side started and leapt away from the gleam of a lamp which shone in the girlish hand. Her taper fingers were edged with crimson against the light, as with them she screened the flickering flame. Arriving at the river bank, she set the lamp afloat upon the current, and watched it drift away. Up and down danced the flame as if on the point of going out, but yet it kept alight, and the dark eyes, behind the silken veil of their long lashes, dwelt longingly upon it as it went. Did the lamp burn so long as the eye could follow it, the maiden knew her lover lived; but should it suddenly fail, so too had the flame of his life. Still the lamp burned. She knelt in prayer. The serpent lurked beside her in the grass, but her thoughts were on the gods and her beloved. 'He is alive!' she cried, and the echo came back to her: 'Alive!'"

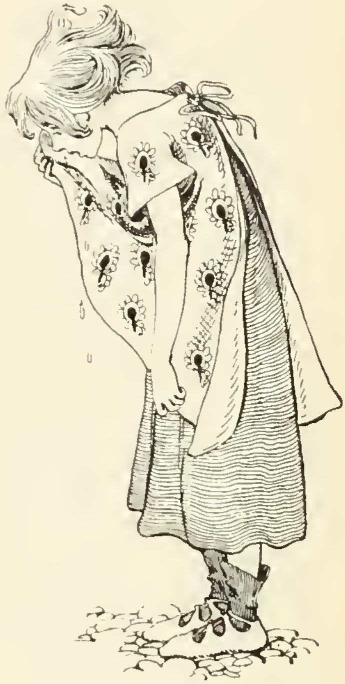

UP AND DOWN DANCED THE FLAME . . . BUT YET KEPT ALIGHT, AND THE DARK EYES DWELT LONGINGLY UPON IT AS IT WENT.

Night the Second

Said the Moon: "I was looking down yesterday upon a small court with houses all around it, and in it clucked a hen and her brood, while around them danced a pretty little girl. The hen was terrified, and made a great to-do, spreading her wings to protect her chicks, till the child's father came out and scolded the cause of it. Then I moved on, and the affair slipped out of my mind. A few minutes ago, however, I looked down into the same yard. All was still. By-and-by the same little girl came out, and creeping to the fowl house, drew the bolt, and entered the coop of the hen and her chickens. They fluttered down from the perch with noisy outcries, and ran to and fro in terror, the child after them. Looking through a hole in the wall, I could see all that went on, and was so angry with the headstrong child that I was delighted when her father came


THE HEN WAS TERRIFIED, AND MADE A GREAT TO-DO, SPREADING HER WINGS TO PROTECT HER CHICKS.

out and gave her a worse scolding than before, with a good shaking this time. She dropped her head, and her eyes brimmed with tears. 'What are you doing?' he asked. She burst out crying, and answered: 'I wanted to give the hen a kiss, and tell her how sorry I am for frightening her yesterday, but I didn't like to tell you.' The father kissed the innocent childish brow, and I kissed her mouth and eyes."

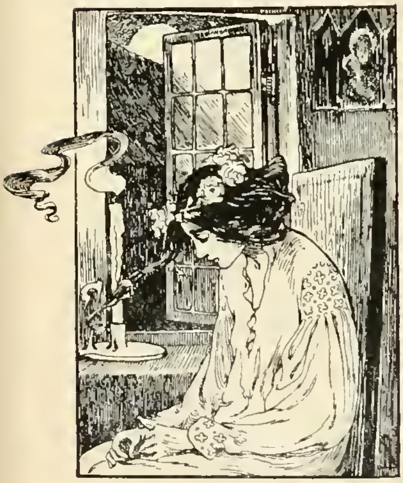


SHE DROPPED HER HEAD, AND HER EYES BRIMMED WITH TEARS.

NIGHT THE THIRD

"There is a narrow lane over there, round the corner, so narrow that only for a moment can my rays fall on the house wall; but a moment is enough to show some ways in which the world goes. In that lane I saw a woman. Sixteen years before I had seen her, a child at play in an old vicarage garden among the fields. Old rose bushes straggled in hedges with faded flowers; they rioted over the paths; they pushed their ragged briars up among the apple boughs. Here and there a rose struggled to bloom without a rose's beauty, but yet with some trace of colour and perfume. A rosebud lovelier than them all to me seemed the vicar's little daughter, as she sat in the shade of the untended hedgerow, and nursed and petted her battered rag doll.

"After ten years I saw her again—a rich man's lovely bride, in a splendid room. Happy in her happiness, I would steal to her on calm evenings. How few think of my silent watching and all-seeing gaze! But ah! poor flower, like the hedgerows of her home, my rose ran wild. Even our workaday life has its tragedies, and to-night I saw the curtain fall on this one. Smitten with the last sickness, she lay in a house in that narrow lane. She had but a tattered coverlet to shield her from the cold, and the wretch who kept the house came up, and tore it off her. 'Up with you,' said he; 'your face would give one the horrors! Get up and dress. Out you go into the street if I don't have my money! Hurry up!' She begged him to let her rest, for the hand of death was on her heart, but he drove her from her bed, forced her to deck her face, and wreathed roses in her hair. Then he made her sit by the window with a light by her, and left her. Motionless she sat, as I looked at her, her hands in her lap. The wind dashed to the open casement with a crash, and the glass fell noisily: she did not stir. The flame caught the curtain, and the light played on her face, and then I saw that she was dead. Poor faded rose from the old garden—there she sat, dead! What a lesson against vice!"



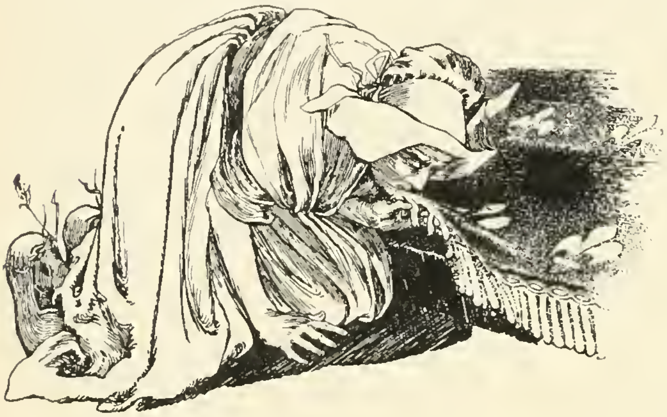
MOTIONLESS SHE SAT, AS I LOOKED AT HER, HER HANDS IN HER LAP.

NIGHT THE FOURTH

"To-night," said the Moon, "I saw a play acted. It was in a little German town. They had turned a stable into a theatre by making the stalls boxes, and using coloured paper to hide the wood. From the ceiling hung an iron sconce set with candles. In big theatres, you know, the chandelier vanishes through the ceiling at the tinkle of the prompter's bell, and that this might do the same, a big tub had been placed upside down over it. The bell rang, and the chandelier rose quite a foot, and vanished in the tub. The play was going to begin. The house was crowded, for a baron and his dame chanced to be passing through the little town, and honoured the performance with their presence. But for all the crowd there was a gap left under the chandelier, from which dripped the tallow in streams. It was so warm that they opened every chink, and I could see everything. The serving-men and maids stood peeping in, though threatened by a police officer inside with his staff. The baron and baroness sat close by the orchestra, in a couple of old high-backed chairs generally kept for the worshipful mayor and mayoress. These, however, had for once to be ordinary citizens and sit on the wooden forms. Said the good dame under her breath: 'One sees now that rank has rank above it.' The fact seemed to make the evening still more a festival. The chandelier swung, the crowd got its knuckles rapped, and I saw the whole comedy."

Night the Fifth

Said the Moon: "Yesterday I was looking down upon the bustle of Paris, and saw into an apartment of the Louvre. A poorly dressed old woman of the *ouvrier* class was being brought by a menial into the great vacant Throne-room This was the room she had longed and was determined to see, and to get to it had cost her many a little bribe and much entreaty. She clasped her skinny hands, looking round her with the reverence she would have shown in church. 'And it was here—here,' she said. She went up to the throne draped in rich velvet with heavy fringes of bullion. 'Here,' she exclaimed, 'here!' She knelt down and kissed the purple. She was weeping. 'But this was not the velvet,' said the lackey, with a suspicion of a smile hovering round his mouth. 'No,' said the old woman, 'but this was the place, and it must have looked like it does now.' 'Like and not like,' said the other, 'for the windows were shattered, the doors beaten in, and the floor ran blood.' 'In spite of all that,' said the old woman, 'my grandson died on the Throne of France! Ah, died!' she repeated sadly. They did not speak again, and soon left the room. The dusk deepened, and my beams flooded the rich velvet hangings round the Throne of France. Who do you think the poor woman was? Listen.


SHE KNELT DOWN AND KISSED THE PURPLE.

"It was the evening of the most successful day in the Revolution of July. The people stormed the Tuileries; they forced their way into hall and salon; even women and children fought there. Among the older rioters was a poor lad in a ragged blouse, who fought to the Throne-room, where he sank, wounded to the death by repeated bayonet thrusts. They laid him in his blood on the throne of France, and wrapped the velvet round him. His blood dyed the purple with a deeper stain. Think of the scene—the vast hall, the groups of combatants, a torn flag on the ground, with the red, white and blue above the bayonets, and on the throne, the dying boy, his white ecstatic face turned heavenwards, his breast bare, his rags hidden by the purple velvet sown with silver lilies! At his birth it had been foretold of him: he will die on the throne of France! His mother treasured it in her heart, and dreamed of a second Napoleon. My beams have silvered the white *immortelles* on his grave, and touched the brow of the old grandame. She dreamed of the dead boy on the throne of France."

Night the Sixth

Said the Moon: "I come from Upsala, from the rolling plain rough with stubbly grass, from the barren fields, from the river Tyris that reflected my image, while the paddle-wheel frightened the fish into the reeds. Beneath me hung the clouds, whose long shadows raced over the graves of Odin, and Thor, and Freya. The turf on the hill is thin, and many have cut names in it, for there is no building here for the tourist to scratch his name upon, no rock-cliff on which to paint it. Through the cuts in the turf the brown earth shows, and names so graved enmesh the hill with an immortality that lasts till the springing of the new turf! On the hill a man stood. He drained the horn of mead with its deep silver rim, and whispered a name to the winds. But I heard it and knew it. He did not speak it aloud, for it bears the lustre of an earl's coronet. I smiled, for his has the glory of a poet's crown. The noble rank of Eleanora d'Este is in her link with Tasso's name. And where the Rose of Beauty blooms, I know."

The Moon ended, for a cloud severed us.

NIGHT THE SEVENTH

"A wood of firs and beeches fringes the edge of the shore, a fresh and fragrant wood, very pleasant, and the haunt of myriad nightingales in spring. Hard by rolls the shifting sea, separated from the wood only by the broad high road, over which rolls coach after coach, unfollowed by me, who love to gaze at one spot best of all. It is the Barrow of the Hun, among whose stones the wild plum and the thorn run riot. Here if anywhere can be felt the soul of Nature.

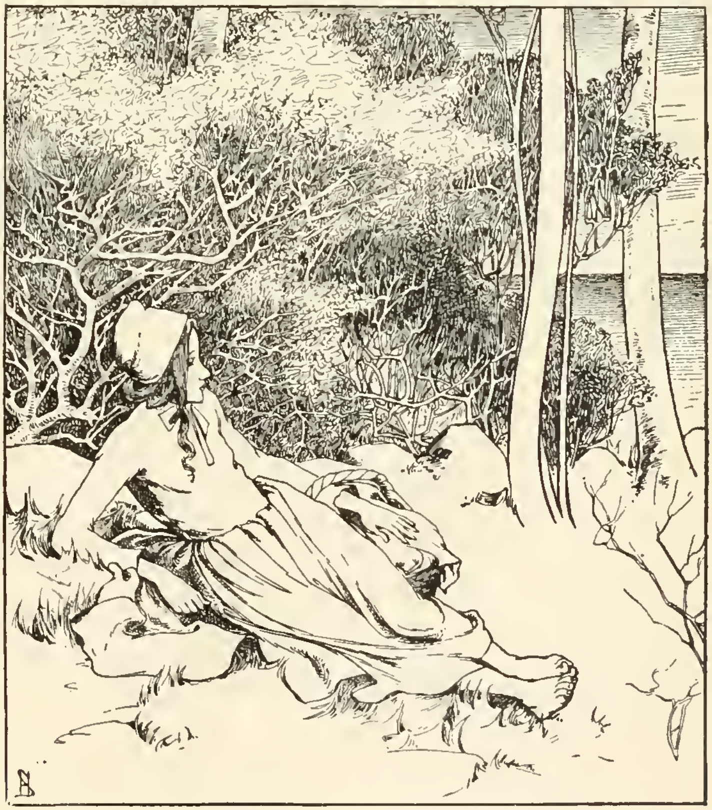
"And what do men feel of this soul? This is what I heard last night. Two rich squires came riding by. 'Splendid trees, those,' said the one. 'Rather: ten loads of firewood in each,' said the other; 'a hard winter ahead of us, and three pounds a load we got last year'—and off they went.

"'Vile road here,' said another, driving past. 'All the fault of those wretched trees,' answered his companion; 'there's no breeze possible, save from the sea'; and on they went. Next came the stage coach, with all its passengers asleep. The guard blew his horn, but all he thought was of his good playing, and how well it sounded under the trees, and whether it was appreciated by the people inside the coach. Then up galloped two lads. Ah, youth and the fire in the blood, thought I, and as a matter of fact, they did give a smile at forest and grassy hill. 'I should like a walk here with a girl,' said one, and off they went.

"The air was full of the scent of flowers, but not the lightest breeze moved. The sky that arched over the deep vale, seemed to unite with the blue sea. A carriage with six people in it drove by. Four were asleep: one was in a reverie—about his latest suit; the other one turned and asked the coachman whether there was any story connected with the mound over there. 'No,' said the driver, 'it's just a heap of stones; but the trees are worth noting.' 'Why?' 'Oh, very well worth noting. In winter, you know, the snow gets very deep and hides all the road, and these trees give me my direction. I steer by them so as not to drive into the sea; that's why they're so remarkable.'

"The next comer was an artist. He didn't say anything, but he looked pleased, and began to whistle. The nightingales redoubled their song. 'Oh, be quiet,' he cried, in a temper. He noted carefully the colour effects and passing of one hue into another. 'It will be a capital picture,' he thought, but he received it to reproduce it with no more feeling than a mirror has in reflecting a view, and he whistled Rossini as he worked.

"Then came a poor girl, who dropped her load, and sat down to rest on the Grave of the Hun. Her sweet white face was turned to the wood, as if she listened to a message. Her eyes grew bright; she looked at sea and sky; I think she prayed, for her hands were folded. The emotions that passed through her she did not comprehend, but the moment, the lovely glimpse of Nature, will abide with her for years more vividly and really than the painter's pencil can limn on canvas. I followed her with my beams till dawn grew bright above her."



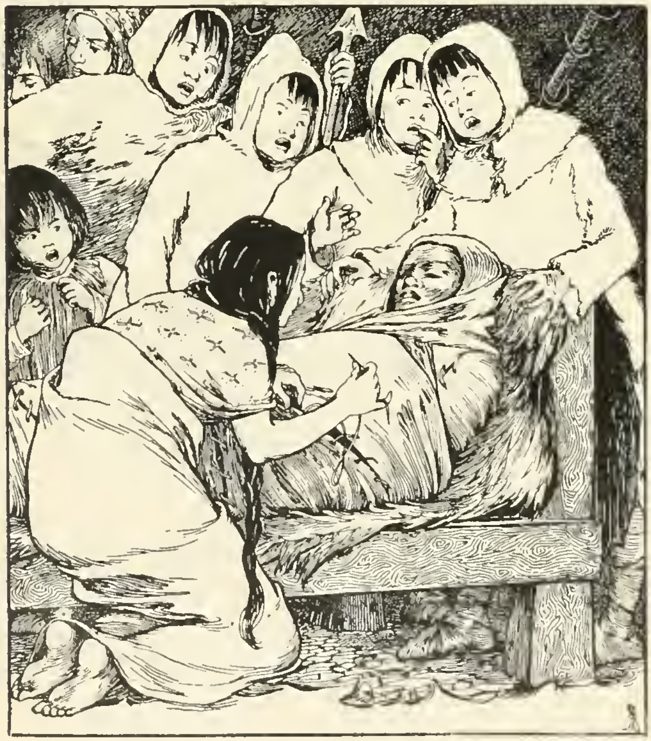
THEN CAME A POOR GIRL, WHO DROPPED HER LOAD, AND SAT DOWN TO REST ON THE GRAVE OF THE HUN.

NIGHT THE EIGHTH

The sky was black with masses of cloud, and I did not see the Moon. Lonelier than ever I stood in my garret and gazed at the place in the sky where she should have been shining. Far away with the Moon flew my thoughts. Hers, indeed, has been an experience. With just the same smile that lately lighted upon me, she shone upon the waters of the Flood as they bore up the Ark, with comfort and the assurance of the birth of a new world from the old. Sorrowfully fell her light upon the willows on which hung the untouched harps around the waters of Babylon, where wept the Chosen People. When Romeo climbed the balcony, and love's hovering wings o'ershadowed him, the clear air was bright with the beams of this selfsame orb of the Moon, barred by the funeral boughs of the cypress trees. In the little isle of St. Helena she looked upon the imprisoned Titan, whose soul was stirred by the tempest of ambition as he gazed from his lonely eyrie over the waste of waters. What tales could the Moon tell, for the life of man is an open book to her! Not to-night shall I see thee, friend of mine! Not to-night shall the remembrance of thy visitation inspire my pencil. But at the moment of my reverie, a brightening of the sky, a rush of light, and a ray of the Moon upon me! Quickly the dark wrack drove on, and the light vanished—the friend's greeting, the Moon's good night.

NIGHT THE NINTH

Several evenings passed; the sky was clear, the Moon a slender crescent. Again she spoke: "I followed the gull of the north and the wallowing whale to the shores of Greenland. Above a valley green with stunted willow and bilberry bush, towered bleak rocks, clad with ice and veiled with dark cloud. My beams were faint, my disk wan as the water lily uprooted and long drifting on the current, for the diadem of the Northern Lights glowed fiercely in the sky. Now green, now red, the fiery arrows shot from the broad ring far across the heavens. Well used to the lovely sight, the dwellers in that region scarcely glanced at it, as they gathered for their tribal dance. 'It is the spirits playing ball with walrus' heads,' they thought, in superstitious fancy; 'leave them alone,' and they turned to their dancing. In the middle of the ring stood a native, his seal-skin cloak tossed aside, and a small pipe in his hand. First he played, then he sang about the seal hunt, while those around joined in the refrain, and danced in a ring, till, with their fur dresses, you might have fancied it a dance of white bears. Then a Doom Ring was formed, and those who had a feud came forward. The injured one broke out into a song reciting his foeman's offence, and heaping ridicule upon him, while the pipe sounded and the dance went on. His opponent answered in like fashion, and the listeners laughed, and gave the Doom.



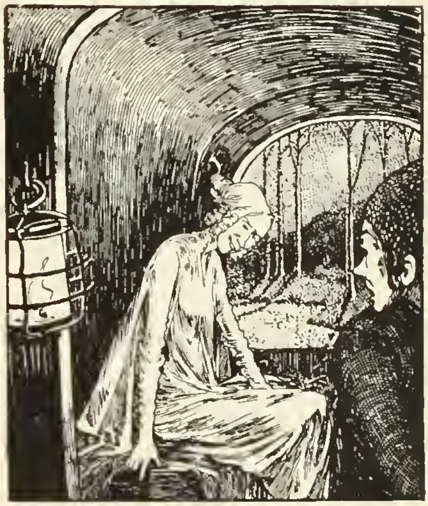
A SHROUD OF SKINS WAS ALREADY BEING SEWED UPON HIM BY HIS WIFE.

"It was a splendid night of the short northern summer. The rocks split, streams ran from the melting glaciers, and avalanches of ice and snow crashed down in splinters at the mountain fort. A little way off, under a skin tent, lay a dying man. Life yet was warm in his veins, but he was doomed; he knew it, and those around him knew it too. A shroud of skins was already being sewed upon him by his wife, that she might avoid touching his body after death. 'Where wilt thou be buried?' she asked. 'If on land, in the frozen snow, I will set thy boat above it, with thy spears, and the medicine man shall dance round it. Or wouldst thou the sea?' 'The sea,' he answered, smiling sadly. 'Yes, a pleasant tent is the sea,' said the wife. 'There sports the seal in his thousands; in thy track shall the sea-horse lie, and merry shall be the hunt!' With loud outcries the children tore the skin covering from the opening of the tent, that the dead' might be borne to the waves of ocean, the sea that had nourished him living, and now should take him, dead, to its peaceful embrace. Above him should float the seal-hunted, ever-changing bergs of ice, around whose glittering pinnacles for ever wails the stormy sea-mew."

NIGHT THE TENTH

"Once upon a time," said the Moon, "I knew an old maid. In winter she wore a yellow satin gown, never altering its fashion, and summer after summer saw her with the same straw hat, and the selfsame dress of bluish-gray. She never left her room, save to visit an old friend across the way, and as years went on, and the friend died, even this visit ceased. Left to her loneliness, my spinster busied herself with her window-garden which was gay with flowers in summer, and in winter green with mustard and cress sown upon flannel. For the last few months of her life I did not see her at the window, but I knew her to be living, for I had not yet seen her start on that 'long journey' of which she had so often spoken to her friend. 'Yes, yes,' she would say, 'when my death comes, I shall take a longer journey than at any time in my life. Our family grave lies six miles away, and there I shall be carried, to sleep among my kith and kin.'

"Last night a hearse stopped at the house; a shell was carried out, and I knew that she was dead. They set straw round the coffin, and the hearse drove off, and in it, resting quietly, the old dame who had not left her house these last twelve months. Out through the town gate rolled the hearse as briskly as if to a picnic, and once out on the high road, the pace was faster still. Every now and then the driver glanced round nervously, as if in fear of seeing her sitting on the coffin, yellow gown and all, and, being nervous, he flicked his horses, at the same time hauling at the reins, till the poor beasts were all in a lather, for they were young and skittish. A hare darted across the road, and made them shy. Then they fairly bolted. The staid old spinster, who, for year after year, had lived her quiet humdrum life, was now, in her death, jolted over rut and stone of the high road. The straw-packed coffin fell out, and was left lying in the road. Horses, driver, hearse rushed wildly on. Up from the meadow fluttered the lark singing her morning hymn above the coffin, on which presently she lit, and pecked at the covering straw. Soon she rose again, with joyous song, and I vanished in the rosy morning clouds."

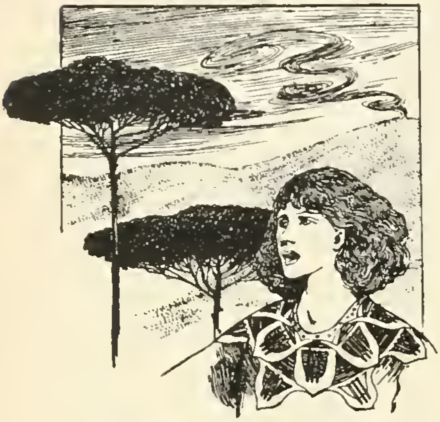


THE DRIVER GLANCED ROUND NERVOUSLY.

NIGHT THE ELEVENTH

"It was Pompeii," said the Moon. "I shone upon the Street of Tombs, where, centuries ago glad youth and lovely maiden danced garlanded with flowers. Now all was still as death. A guard of Germans in the army of Naples played cards and rattled the dice. Travellers from over the hills came to visit the city, which they wished to see by my light, the city risen from the tomb. I showed them the streets paved with lava blocks, and still scored with the wheel ruts; I showed the names above the doors, the shop signs swinging still, the fountain basins, with shell patterns round, but no water jet danced up, no song rang from the painted rooms where the bronze watch-dog kept the threshold.

"A City of the Dead! yet still Vesuvius thundered with that mighty voice a hymn whose verses are to man but outbursts of the hidden fires. There was the temple of Venus, marble snow-white, its broad steps leading up to the altar, but through the stones and among the columns the green trees sprang. Far away Vesuvius stood up black in the deep-blue, crystalline sky, while from the summit rose in pine-tree shape the pillar of smoke, lit ever by the fires beneath. Among the travellers was a singer, a woman of power which I have seen honoured in all the cities of Europe. The party came to the theatre, and sat there on the stone benches, a tiny audience where crowds had thronged ages ago. There was the stage; the walls still stood at the wings, and through the double arches behind showed the same background, the mountains stretching from Sorrento to Amalfi. The singer stood upon the time-worn stage, and sang. Now her song had the rush and power of the wild street; now its mournful notes recalled the *Stabat Mater*. Again, after a thousand years, the sound of applause filled the theatre. A few minutes more and the stage was deserted; the party was gone, and all was still. But there stood the ruins, as they will stand when centuries more have vanished, when the singer and her moment are forgotten, and I alone brood over the past."



THE SINGER STOOD UPON THE TIME-WORN STAGE AND SANG.

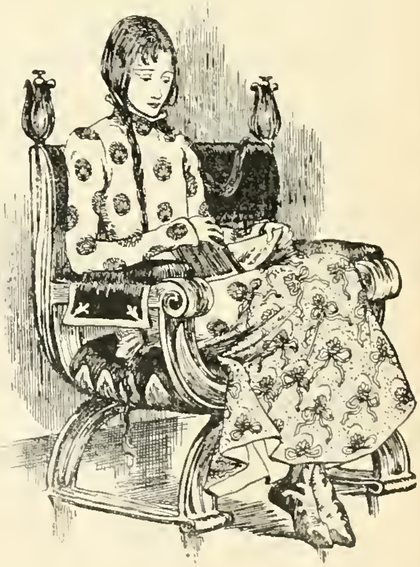
Night the Twelfth

"It was in Germany," said the Moon, "and I was peeping through the window of a newspaper office. Good furniture, books, a litter of papers, some young men of the staff, and the editor at his desk, were what I saw. Two new books by young writers were to be reviewed. 'I've not read this one yet,' said the chief; 'what do you think of it?' The one addressed was himself a poet. 'It's well enough,' he answered; 'the faults of youth, and the verse might be improved. Thoughts all right, but plenty of commonplace. But there, you can't always get originality. He'll never be great, but you're safe in praising him—well-read, knows Eastern languages, has good judgment, and so forth. He wrote a capital review of my *Home Thoughts*. We must let him down gently.' 'But he's the merest rhymer,' argued another. 'Poetry must be very good, or it's nothing, and mediocrity is his highest flight.' 'Poor chap,' said a third, 'and his aunt is so delighted about him, and it was she who got so many names to subscribe for the chief's latest.' 'Good for her,' said the editor, 'so she did. Well, I've given him a line or two. "Well-marked-talent—a welcome production—another flower in the field of poetry—well got up," and the rest. But what about this other? I hear it well spoken of, and there's a touch of genius in it. Eh?' 'Well, yes,' said the first speaker, 'everybody says so, but he's rather apt to kick over the traces. Look at his wild stopping, for instance.' 'Do him good to pull him to bits, then stir him up a little. Your genius gets too good an opinion of himself.' 'But,' said the one who objected to the first book, 'that's hardly fair, you know. Don't let's pick holes in it, but look at the lot of good work it contains, and be thankful for it. He's head and shoulders over the others.' 'Not a bit of it,' said another, 'genius can stand running down. Plenty will praise him. We won't help turn his head.' 'Real talent,' wrote the editor, 'with the usual slip-shod work. Two false quantities on one page show bad versification. He had better study the classics,' etc.

"I went off," the Moon continued, "and peeped in at the aunt's house. The log-rolling poet was sitting in a ring of admiring guests, praised and happy. The other, the genius, I found at a patron's big *At Home*, where his rival's book was on every lip. 'I shall read yours, too,' said the great man, 'but, truth to tell—and you know I pride myself on always speaking my mind—I'm not looking for much from it. Too wild, my friend, too much license, though I admit the same can't be said of you personally.'

"Away in a corner sat a girl reading a book; these were the words:—

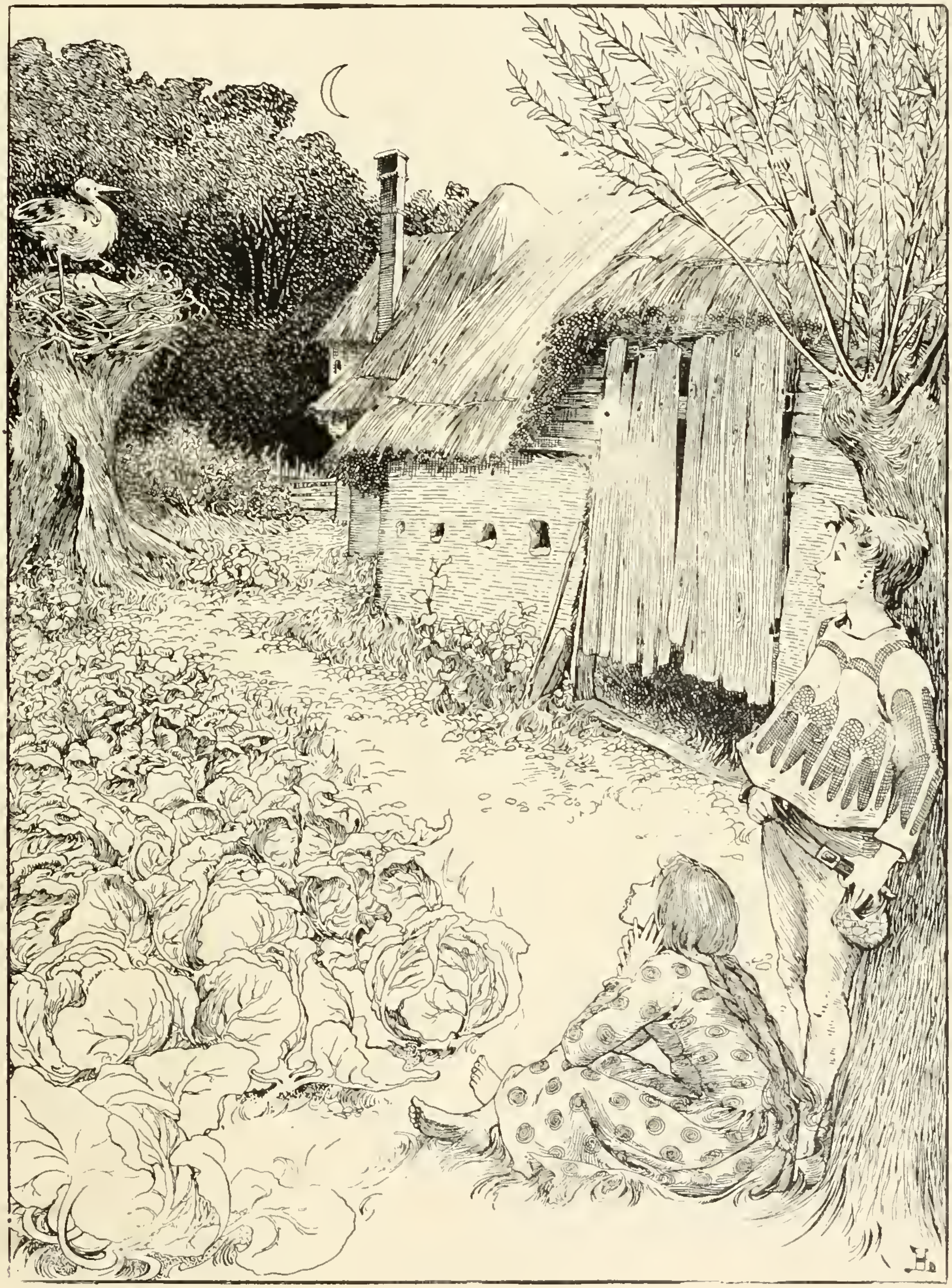
> 'Wit and renown go down, go down,
> Where your commonplace talent will take the crown:
> The tale is old, but each day re-told,
> Your respectable noodle will rake the gold.'"

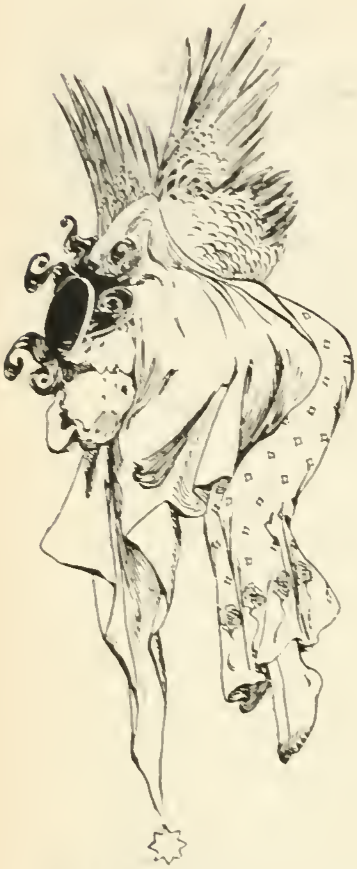


AWAY IN A CORNER SAT A GIRL READING A BOOK.

NIGHT THE THIRTEENTH.

"There is a path through the wood," said the Moon, "and two small cottages beside it, with low doors, and irregularly set windows, some high up, some near the ground. Around each house grow thickets of thorn and wild berry bushes, and on each roof lies moss, and the stonecrop with its yellow flowers, and the wild house-leek. Only a flowerless kitchen-garden is round the cottage,


A LITTLE BOY CAME OUT AND STOOD BY HIS SISTER. "WHAT ARE YOU WATCHING?" SAID HE.



AN ANGEL BRINGS THEM UNDER HIS CLOAK.

but the hedge can boast a willow-tree. Under this a little girl was sitting, watching the old oak between the houses. It was an old, sapless trunk, sawn off at the top, and on it a stork had built. He was standing in it clattering his beak. A little boy came out and stood by his sister.

"'What are you watching?' said he.

"'The stork,' she answered. 'The neighbour said he'd bring us a baby brother or sister to-day; let's wait and see him bring it.'

"'Nonsense,' said the boy, 'the stork does nothing of the sort. The neighbour said the same thing to me, but she laughed, and when I asked her if she would say "Really and truly" she wouldn't: so I know the stork story isn't true. They only tell it us in fun.'

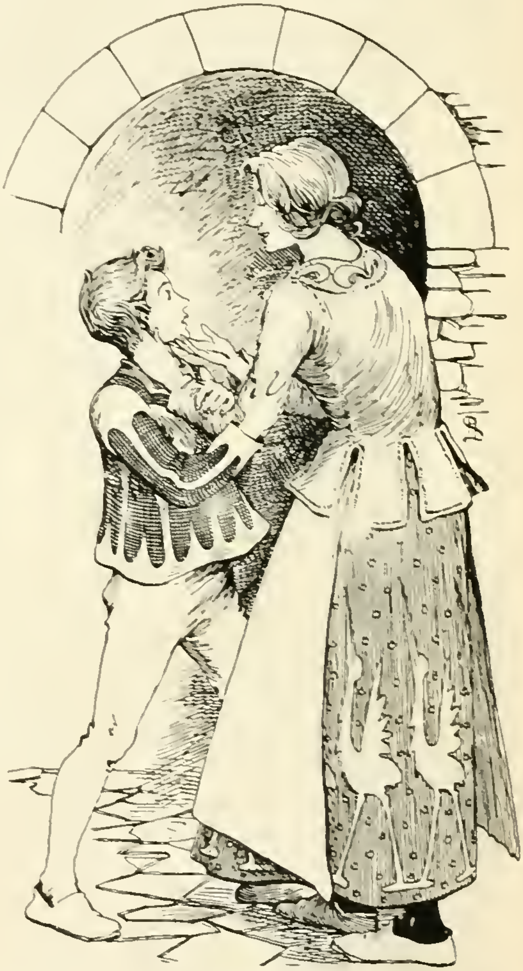
"'Where do babies come from, then?' said his sister.

"'An angel brings them under his cloak,' was the reply.

"Just then the willow branches rustled; the children clasped hands and looked at each other. It must be the angel bringing the baby! The cottage door opened and a neighbour came out.

"'Come in, both of you,' she said, 'and see the little brother the stork brought.'

"The children nodded to each other; they had known already that the baby was come."

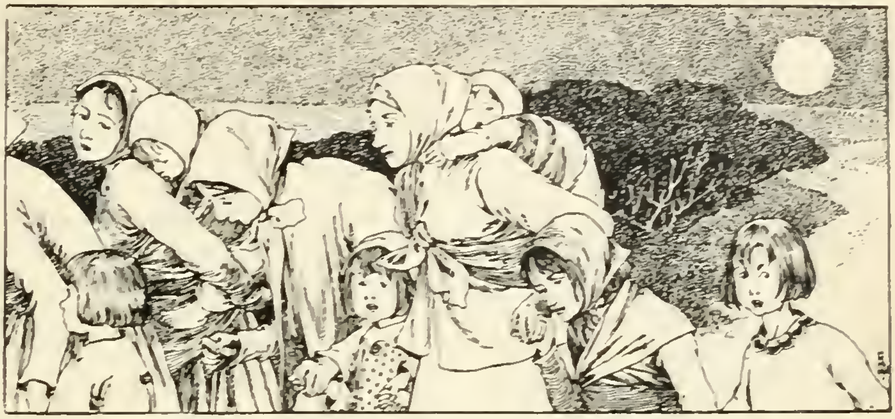


"COME IN, BOTH OF YOU," SHE SAID, "AND SEE THE LITTLE BROTHER THE STORK BROUGHT."

NIGHT THE FOURTEENTH

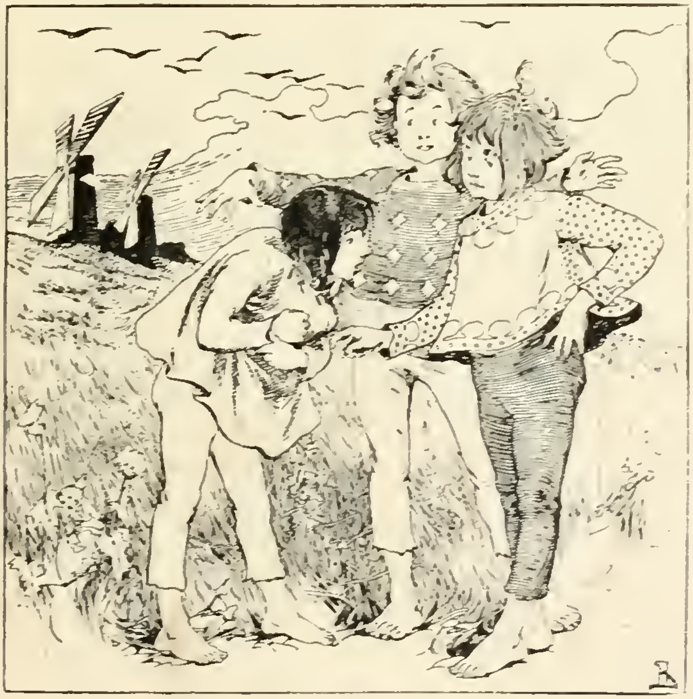
"I was shining in my path over the desolate German moorland," said the Moon. "By the roadside stood a lonely cabin, with a few straggling bushes round, in which a belated nightingale sang sweetly. The bird died in the frost that night: I was listening to its death song. Dawn broke red upon a group of peasants on their way to the seaport, there to embark for America, where they fondly hoped fortune would smile upon them. The wives bore the babies on their backs, while the older ones trotted unsteadily at their sides, and a gaunt, wretched nag dragged a cart with their few poor belongings. The wind whistled chill, and the child pressed closer to the mother. She looked up at my waning disk, and thought of the griping want at home, the cruel load of taxation they could not pay. All were thinking her thoughts, and so the daybreak seemed the harbinger of success that should shine upon them. The doomed nightingale was singing, a prophecy of fortune in its notes! The wind's voice was too loud for them to hear that what the nightingale really sang was: 'Far, far away. All he had he gave to carry him across the sea, far away, and poor, unfriended he shall enter the land of promise. It shall cost him wife and child and self. But short shall the sorrow be. Death waits for him, and welcome shall be the fever of Death's kiss, far away, far, far away.' But the troop of emigrants listened happily to the bird's song, for they thought it a promise of good fortune.

"The dawn brightened into morning; countryfolk moved churchwards across the moor; with their black gowns and white coifs the women looked as if they had stepped down from some old painting. As far as eye could see stretched the barren plain, brown with withered broom, black where the burnt-up hollows lay between the glaring white of the sand-hills. Hymn-book in hand the peasant women entered the church,—ah! pray for those who leave their home to find a grave beyond the sea."

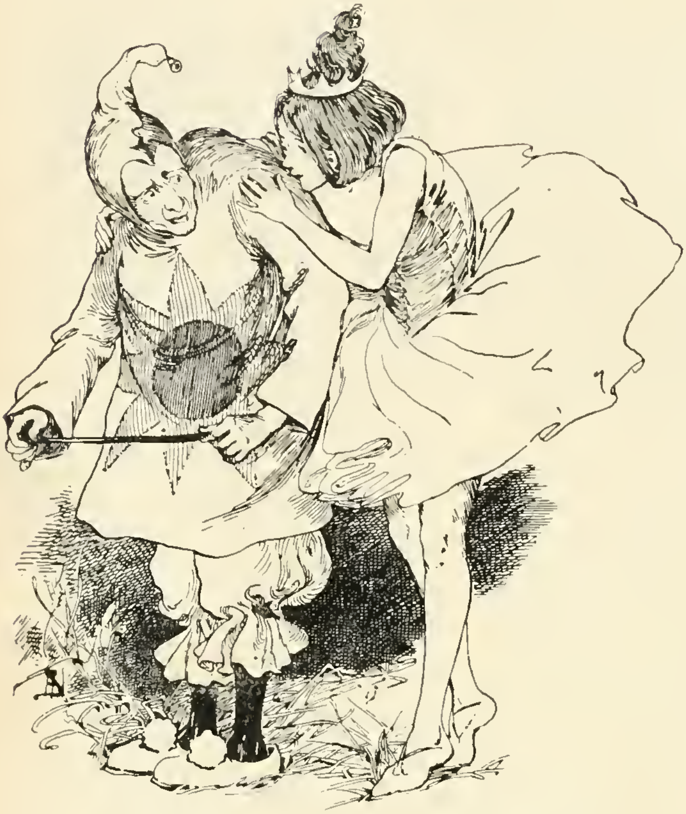

THE WIVES BORE THE BABIES ON THEIR BACKS, WHILE THE OLDER ONES TROTTED UNSTEADILY AT THEIR SIDES.

NIGHT THE FIFTEENTH

"Once I knew a clown," said the Moon. "Every time he appears he gets rounds of applause. He can't move a finger without being funny, and throwing the audience into convulsions of laughter. Not that he tries to do it: it comes natural to him, for as a child among children Nature marked him out for Punch's part. A hump on his back, a bunch on his breast—and in contrast a native wit unsurpassable for depth of feeling and quickness of apprehension. The world of his ideal lay behind the scenes; he was possessed by the heroic. With a graceful, well-knit figure he might have reached the heights of tragic power: and he had to play buffoon! The melancholy stamped on his clear-cut features only accentuated the dry irony of their expression, and won fresh applause from his audience. Columbine, indeed, was beautiful and kind to him, but she chose Harlequin for husband. For beauty to wed deformity would have been the height of the absurd.


AS A CHILD AMONG CHILDREN NATURE MARKED HIM OUT FOR PUNCH'S PART. A HUMP ON HIS BACK, A BUNCH ON HIS BREAST.

"Columbine was the only one who could bring even a smile, much more a laugh, from our clown when he was out of spirits. She would share his sadness first, and then lead him out of it by degrees quite to cheerfulness. 'I know what ails you,' she would say. 'You're in love!' and he would burst into laughter. 'Love named in the same breath with me? Absurd! How the gallery would roar!' 'Ah,' she would insist, with pathetic badinage, 'but you are in love, and in love with me!' One can speak like that of the impossible. Then the clown would laugh again, and turn a somersault, and his grief would be forgotten.



COLUMBINE INDEED WAS BEAUTIFUL AND KIND TO HIM.

"But she spoke truth; he did love her, heart and soul, with an ideal love. He was the gayest of the guests at her bridal, but in the depth of the night the benches would have roared again to see the writhing of his face as he wept.

"Columbine died a day or two ago, and Harlequin had leave of absence from the stage on the day of her funeral, because of his bereavement. The manager had to make up for the loss of Columbine's beauty and Harlequin's agility by a farce in which the clown had to take his part more vehemently than ever. So our Punchinello danced, with hopeless grief at heart, and danced so well that they called him before the curtain afterwards.

"But last night the misshapen dwarf went alone to the lonely churchyard. There he sat, a study for a painter, on Columbine's grave, where the flowers were already fading. His chin on his hands, his eyes turned up to me, he looked liked a grotesque sculpture—a headstone Punch, eerie and fantastic. Could his audience have seen him they would have applauded to the echo."

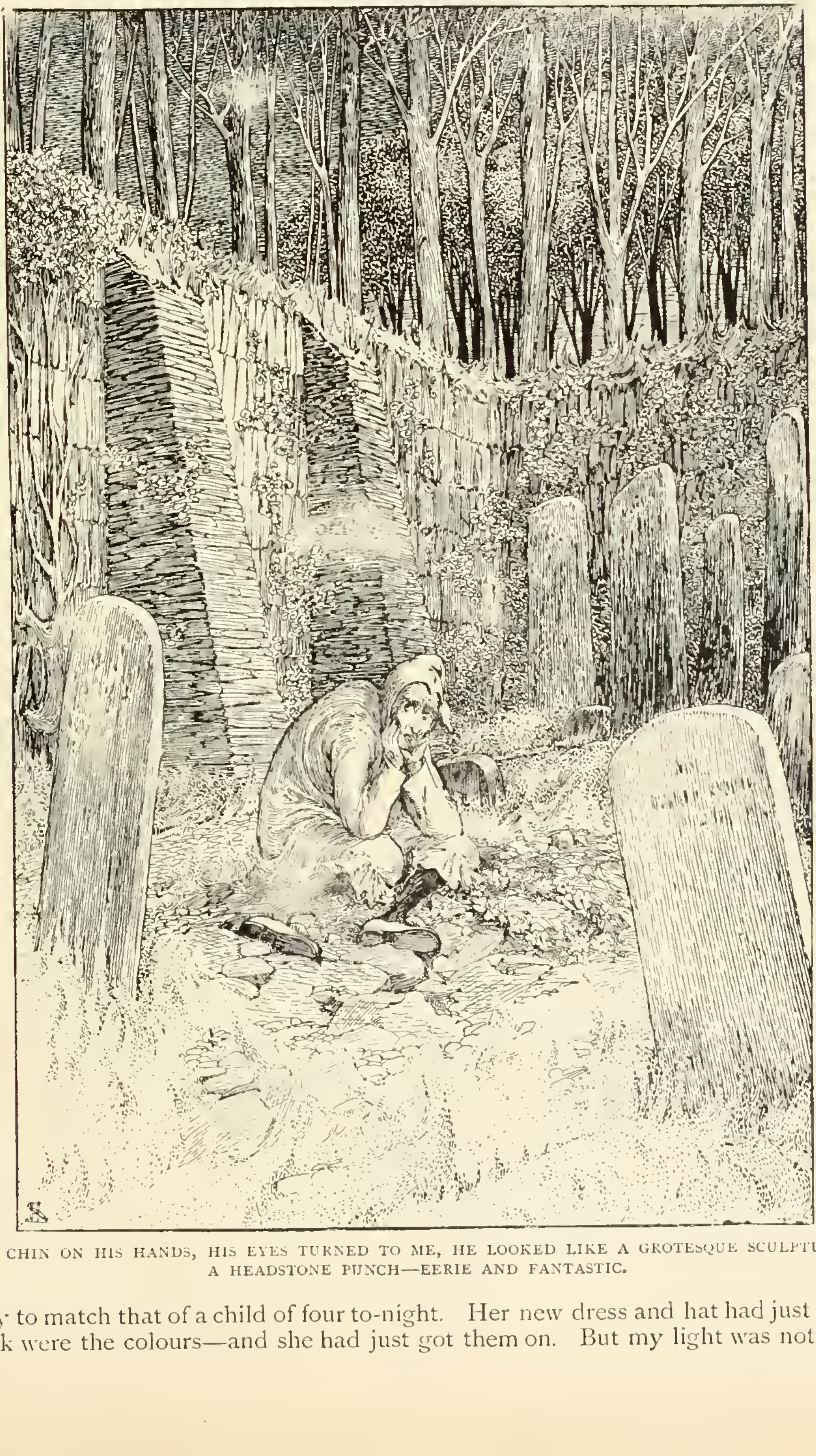
Night the Sixteenth

"I have told you of Pompeii," said the Moon, "the dead city dragged before the gaze of the living There is another sight still stranger—not a dead, a spectre city! As the fountain-jet plashes into its basin, to my ears it sings the story of the city of the sea. Falling water tells it, the breaking wave reverberates it. The mists that lie on the ocean-levels are the veil of a widowed bride, for the city that espoused the sea is dead, and its palaces are its tomb! No hoof-beat or roll of wheels has ever sounded in that city's streets. The fish swim down those highways, and the black gondola moves shadow-like over the clear water. It is a fairy city. In the largest square the rank grass grows at will between the broad flag-stones, and round the lofty tower flutter thousands of pigeons. Cloistered walks line three sides of the square, and there sits the impassive Turk, his long hookah in his hand; there the Greek leans against the column, and gazes at mast and blazon, tokens of a vanished power. The pennons droop like mourning scarves. Against one mast of victory bends a girl. She is resting, and has set down her heavy pails, with the yoke that bore them. Yonder lies a church: did you think it a palace of the fairy-court, whose gilded dome and ball reflect my rays? Those noble bronze horses up there have journeyed to and fro like the horse of bronze in Eastern myth—hither, hence, and hither again. Look at the splendour of wall and casement; its varied loveliness seems the fancy of a child embodied by genius. There stands St. Mark's winged lion on the pillar. His gilt glitters still, but his wings are clipped. Dead, the Lord of the Sea is dead! Desolate lie the vast halls; where rich tapestry once hung, the bare wall shows gaunt; the beggar rests beneath the arches that rang aforetime to the tread of the proud and great. All is changed, save that from the prison of the Bridge of Sighs rises the same faint, mournful echo as when music throbbed from the light gondola, and Adria, Queen of Seas, was wedded with the ring cast from the Doge's galley of state. Veil thyself in mist, bereaved

Adria; wrap thyself in the dark weeds of widowhood, and drape with sable folds the marble tomb of thine espoused Venice, the desolate, haunted Venice!"

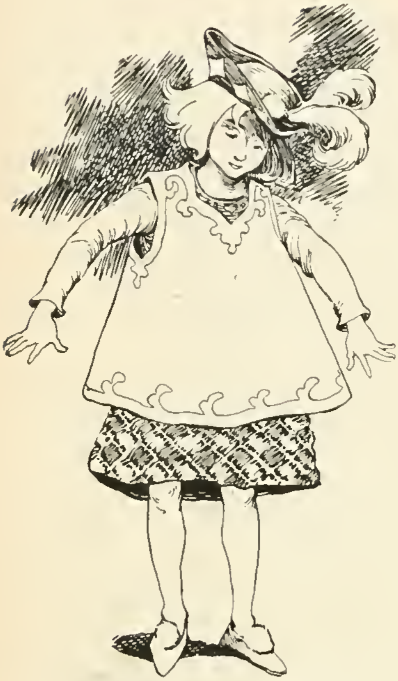
Night the Seventeenth

"I have seen the schoolboy put on his ensign's uniform for the first time; I have seen the bride in her orange blossom, the young Queen in her robes of state, but never have I seen in any of these a joy to match that of a child of four to-night. Her new dress and hat had just come home—blue and pink were the colours—and she had just got them on. But my light was not enough; they



HIS CHIN ON HIS HANDS, HIS EYES TURNED TO ME, HE LOOKED LIKE A GROTESQUE SCULPTURE—A HEADSTONE PUNCH—EERIE AND FANTASTIC.

must have a candle. There stood the little thing, stiff and starched, her arms held away from the dress, and her fingers separate. Her face glowed with delight. Her mother told her that to-morrow she should wear the new clothes out of doors, and the child glanced first at the hat and then at the dress, and smiled her pleasure. 'Why, mother,' she cried, 'what will all the little dogs say to see me in these fine new things!'"



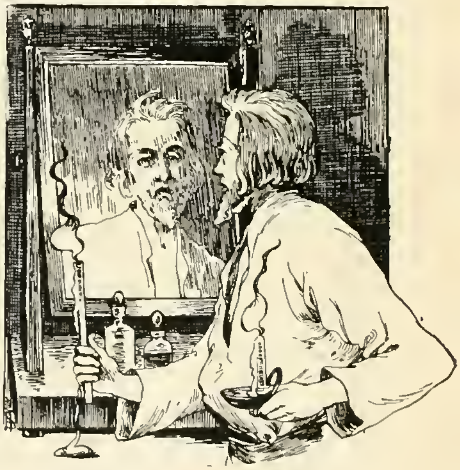
THERE STOOD THE LITTLE THING, STIFF AND STARCHED.

NIGHT THE EIGHTEENTH.

"It was a crowded night at a large theatre," said the Moon, "and a new actor was to make his first appearance. As I shone upon a little window in the wall I could see a face pressed against the panes. The rouged cheeks and curled beard showed that evening's *débutant*, but the eyes glistened with tears. He had been hissed off, a pronounced failure. Poor fellow! but there is no room in the world for failures, even though this one had deep emotions and strong love for the art he essayed, and essayed in vain. The bell rang; he entered, 'the hero, with a resolute air,' as the stage direction ran, only to meet with ridicule.

"At the end of the play his form, closely muffled up, sneaked down the steps among the whispers of the attendants, and I followed him to his attic. The noose is a dog's death, and poison is not always to hand: he had both in mind, for he looked at his white cheeks in the glass, and half shut his eyes, to see if he would make a handsome corpse! Even at his most unhappy moments a man may remain a coxcomb. This one was very sorry for himself, and wept bitterly. Your suicide doesn't cry.

"A year passed, and again a play was announced, this time in a small provincial theatre, by a strolling company. A face I remembered, with rouged cheeks and curling beard, looked up at me and smiled. Yet, a few minutes before, he had again been hissed off, and from a wretched stage by the poorest of poor audiences! To-night a rusty hearse passed the town gate, bearing one slain by his own hand—our poor failure of an actor. The only human being there was the driver, and I was sole mourner. The dead man lies rudely cast into a corner of the churchyard. Nettles will grow rank above him and on his dishonoured earth will be cast the weeds and brambles cleared from other graves."



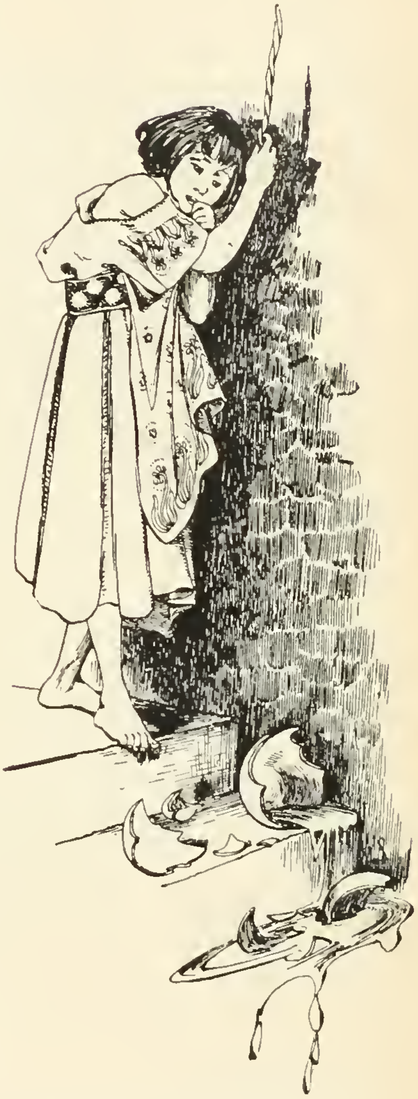
HE LOOKED AT HIS WHITE CHEEKS IN THE GLASS.

NIGHT THE NINETEENTH

"In the Eternal City, on one of the Seven Hills, stand the ruins of the Cæsars' palace. The broad, dusky leaves of the wild fig, sprouting from the crannies of the wall, cover the bare stones above green bays and rank thistles in the rubbish below. From this place once the ravening eagles of Rome flew forth victorious; now the festoons of tendrilled creepers hang like funeral wreaths over the crazy window of a mud hovel plastered between two shattered columns. In it live an old crone and her daughter's child, to keep the palace. The hall of audience and its imperial chair have vanished. A crumbling wall marks the place of the one, and the shadow of funereal cypress falls on knee-deep dust where once the other stood. There the child sits of evenings when the bells ring vespers, and thence, through a cranny of the door, she can see the city crowned by St. Peter's massive dome.

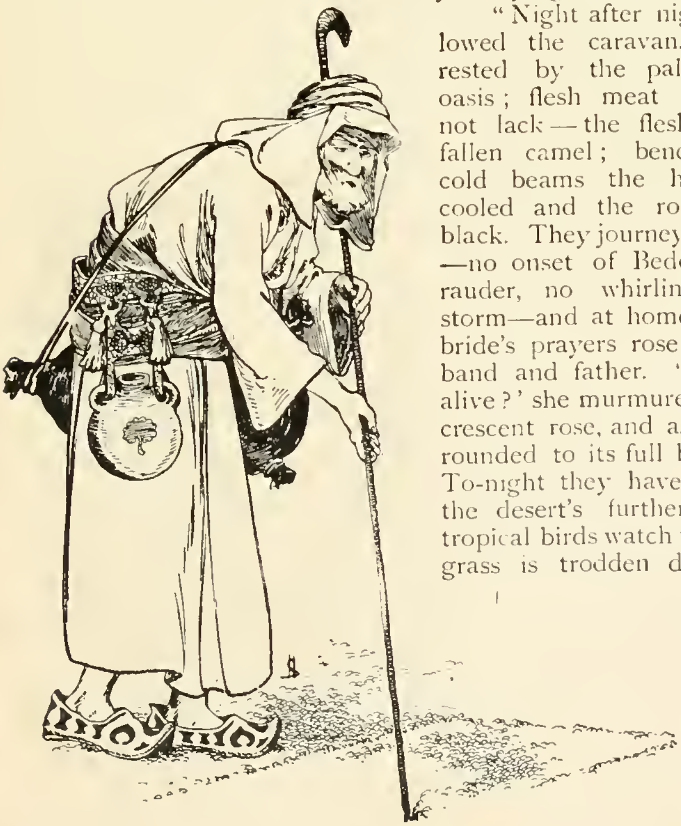
"One still evening the little maiden climbed the steep stairway, roughly built from shattered marble blocks and a fallen pillar-capital. She bore upon her head a water-jar of ancient shape;

her feet were bare, her scanty dress ragged. Round shoulder, dark eye, and lustrous hair—I kissed them all. Before her feet gay-coloured lizards darted unheeded. Raising her hand to the latch-string—a string with a wooden piece admitted to the palace—she paused a moment, thinking, it may be, of the bright-robed Christ-Child in the chapel below, where she and her playmates sang the hymn in the gleam of the silver candlesticks. As she started to move, she tripped, and from her head the jar fell in a hundred pieces on the marble. She burst into tears over the worthless shards. There she stood, barefoot, weeping, daring not to lift the latch to her palace home."


THERE SHE STOOD BAREFOOT, WEEPING, DARING NOT TO LIFT THE LATCH TO HER PALACE HOME.

Night the Twentieth

"It was a caravan, from a town in Morocco, that halted at the desert edge, by a salt sea sparkling like frost, with patches here and there of sand-drift upon it. The leader, his water-gourd at his girdle, and bearing his few thin cakes of flour, drew a figure in the sand with his staff, traced it in some characters of the Koran, and then the whole cavalcade stepped from the hallowed spot into the unknown. One youth, with the dark eye and slender figure of the Oriental, rode on his impatient horse. His thoughts were with the fair bride that, but two days ago, the camel, loaded with rich furs and shawls, had borne to his home, while the clamour of trumpet and tambour, the bridal song of the women, and the din of musket-shots, rang round the city wall; now he, the bridegroom, was journeying across the desert.

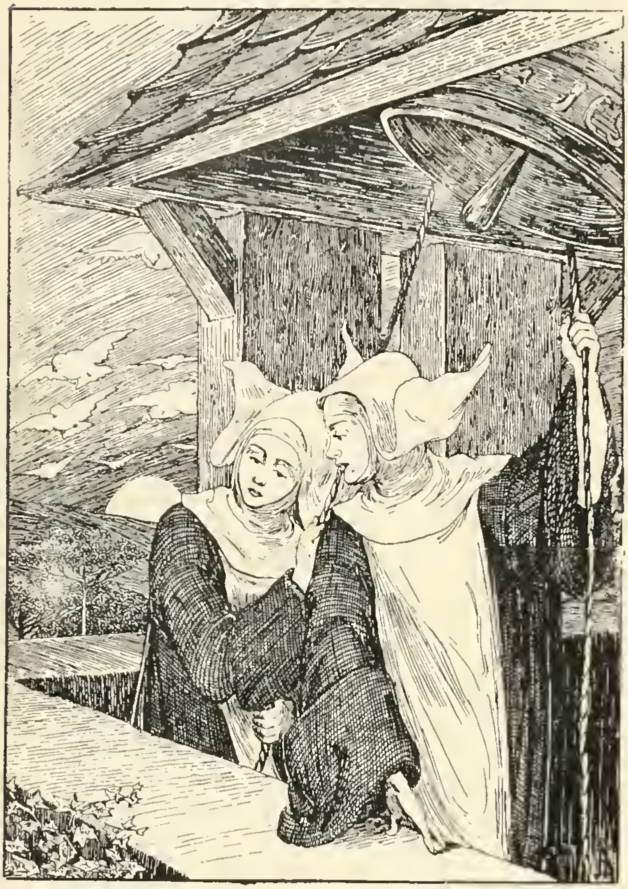

THE LEADER . . . DREW A FIGURE IN THE SAND WITH HIS STAFF.

"Night after night I followed the caravan. They rested by the palm-grown oasis; flesh meat they did not lack—the flesh of the fallen camel; beneath my cold beams the hot sand cooled and the rocks rose black. They journeyed safely—no onset of Bedouin marauder, no whirling sand-storm—and at home the fair bride's prayers rose for husband and father. 'Dead or alive?' she murmured, as my crescent rose, and as my orb rounded to its full brilliance. To-night they have reached the desert's further edge. The palm rises above them, and tropical birds watch them from the trees, at whose foot the lush grass is trodden down by the elephant herd. A group of natives is approaching from the regions farther in. The slow, laden oxen bear the black babies; the women, decked in dyed calico, walk by the side; one leads a lion cub by a leash. They are near, but the bridegroom sits thinking of his bride, left far across the ocean of sand."

The story ended, for cloud after cloud rushed across the Moon.

NIGHT THE TWENTY-FIRST

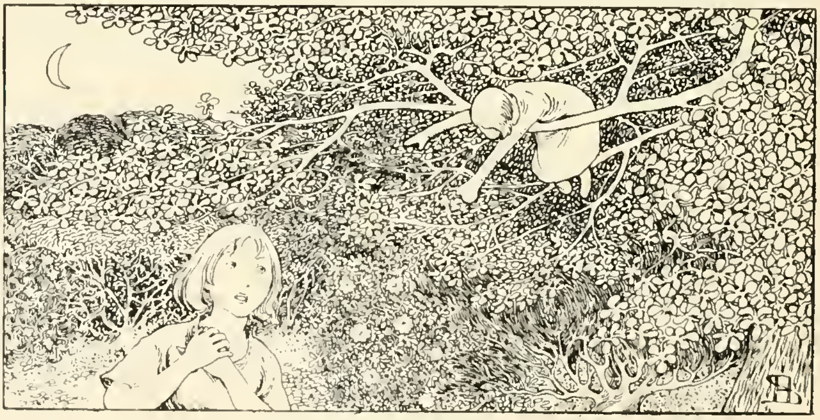
"Shining on Tyrol," said the Moon, "my beams cast long shadows from the pine trees down the crags, and lit up the pictures on the house walls—huge figures, from gable to ground, of Christopher bearing the Christ-Child, Florian quenching the flames, and of the Saviour hanging on the Cross. Old pictures are they all to-day, but I saw them painted one after another. High up on the mountain crest is perched a lonely convent, like a martin's nest clinging to the rock. In the bell-tower stood two of the sisters, still young, and looked out over the world beyond the hill. The *diligence* rattled by, the driver blew his horn. A tear shone in the eye of the younger nun; both followed the coach with wistful looks. Fainter and fainter the horn died away in the clanging of the convent bell."



IN THE BELL-TOWER STOOD TWO OF THE SISTERS, STILL YOUNG, AND LOOKED OUT OVER THE WORLD BEYOND THE HILL.

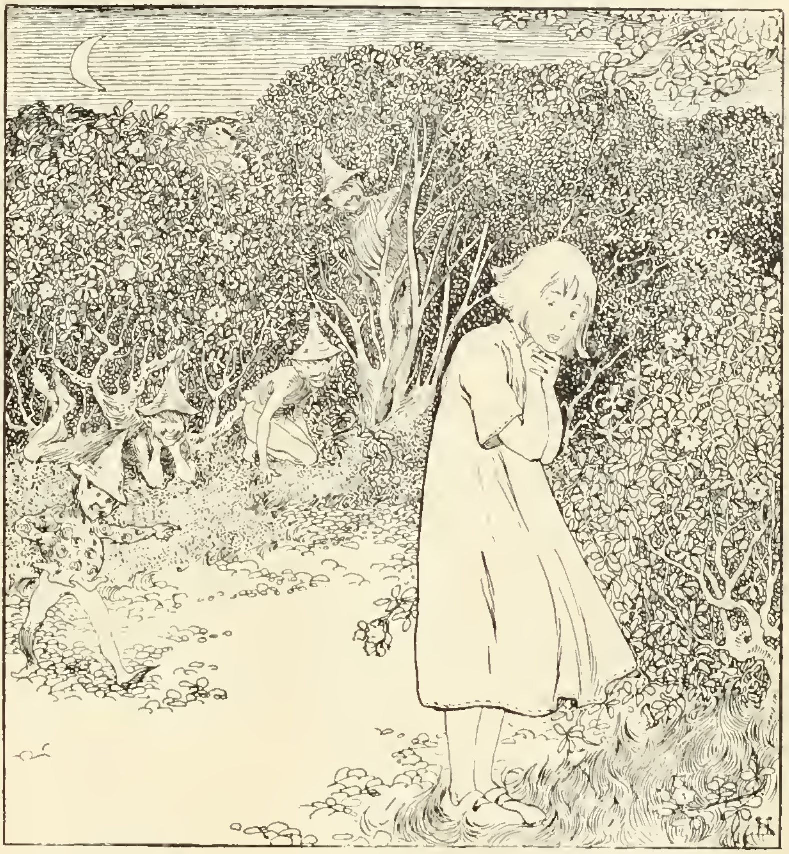
NIGHT THE TWENTY-SECOND

"A child was crying over the cruelty of life. She had had a lovely doll for a present, a doll of dolls, beautiful beyond words, too frail for the rough usage of the world, and those big, bad boys had put her high up in the tree-branches and run off. The child wept, for she could neither reach her doll nor could the doll be helped down, and it seemed as if she, too, must be crying, with her outstretched arms and sad looks. Ah, the child had heard of life's troubles, and now she was tasting them. The night was coming on, and what would become of dolly if it got quite dark? She would have to stay in the tree all night! 'Never mind,' said the child, 'I'll stay too. But she was far from happy. The bushes seemed, to her fancy, crowded with elves in steeple hats, and along the path tall ghosts seemed to move shadowy, nearer and nearer to the doll's tree, and pointing their fingers at the poor thing! They gibbered, and gibed, and laughed; she could hear them, and how terrified she felt! 'But then,' she said to herself, 'you needn't be afraid if you've been good. I wonder if I've been naughty.' She thought for a moment. 'Oh, I have: I laughed at



THE CHILD WEPT, FOR SHE COULD NEITHER REACH HER DOLL NOR COULD THE DOLL BE HELPED DOWN.

the duck with her leg tied up; she *did* limp so funnily. But it's naughty to laugh at it.' Then she looked up at her doll. 'And did you laugh at the duck, dolly?' she said. And the doll nodded its head."

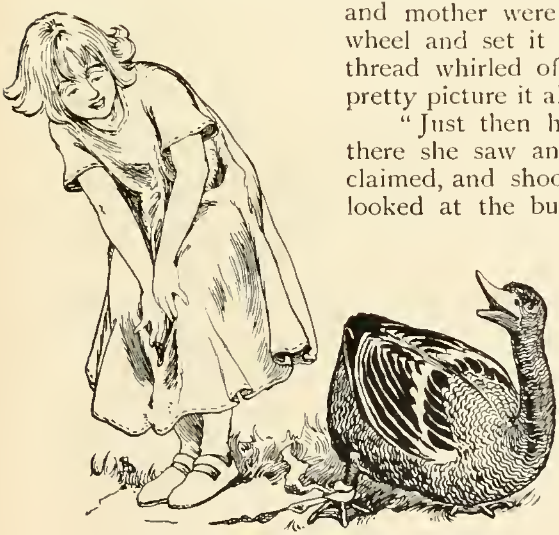


THE BUSHES SEEMED TO HER FANCY CROWDED WITH ELVES IN STEEPLE HATS.

Night the Twenty-Third

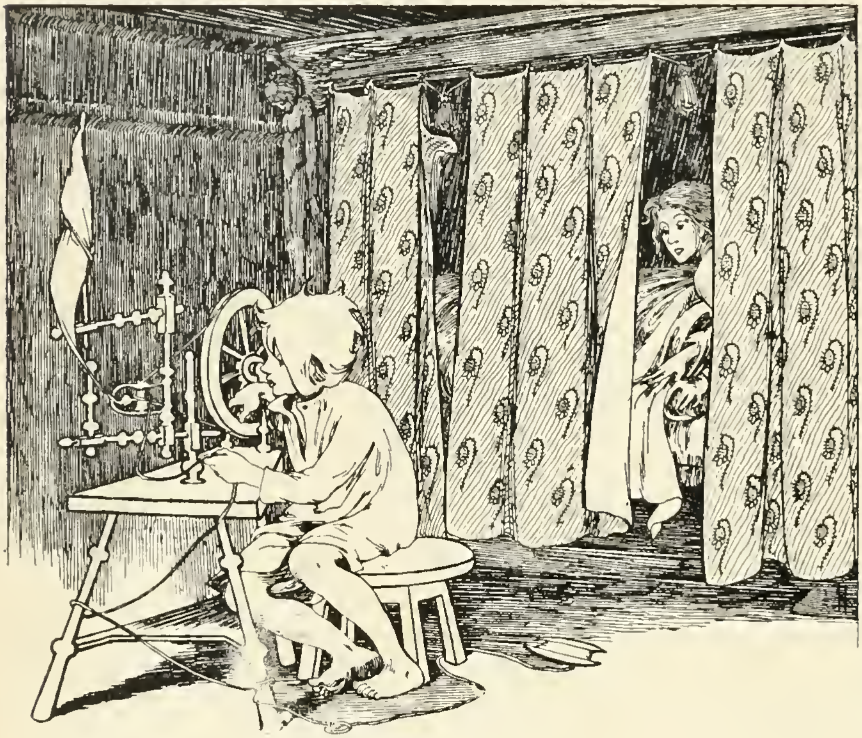
"I was looking through the window of a poor garret in Copenhagen years ago. Mother and father were asleep, but not the little one. The print bed-curtain stirred, and he peeped out. There was the big clock, daubed with red and green, with a cuckoo at the top and the heavy weights below, where the pendulum's bright face swung backwards and forwards—tick, tock; tick, tock. But he did not want to see that. He wanted to see the spinning-wheel, the thing he loved best in the room, though he dared not touch it, for that meant a rap. As his mother spun he would sit for hour after hour, watching the humming and whirring wheel, and thinking to himself how he would like just to turn the wheel with his own hand. His father and mother were asleep. He glanced from them to the wheel, and then a little bare foot peeped out of bed, then the other, followed by two little legs, and there he was! One more glance to see if father and mother were asleep, and then, in his little shift, he stole to the wheel and set it going. Faster and faster flew the wheel, and the thread whirled off, and I kissed the golden hair and blue eyes for the pretty picture it all made.

"Just then his mother woke. She moved the curtain aside, and there she saw an elf or tiny fairy being. 'Good heavens!' she exclaimed, and shook her husband in a fright. He rubbed his eyes, and looked at the busy little fellow. 'Why, it's Bertel,' he said, and I moved on to other sights. I shone upon the Vatican, in whose gallery sit the gods in marble. I shone upon Laocoon, and the stone seemed to breathe and struggle. I kissed the lips of the music, and they seemed to stir; but I dwelt longest about the group of Father Nile, where, under the shadow of the Sphinx, he lies impassive, pondering the rolling years, and the tiny loves, his tributaries, sport with the creatures of the flood. In the cornucopia at his hand sits one little love gazing at the majestic river-god, the very image of the boy at the spinning-wheel, feature for feature the same.



I LAUGHED AT THE DUCK WITH HER LEG TIED UP; SHE DID LIMP SO FUNNILY.

"More than a thousand times has the year turned through its seasons since that baby shape emerged from the block, yet there it stands, in semblance of life. A thousand times whirled the spinning-wheel under the child's hand, and a thousand times the circle of the year moved round between the shaping of the Vatican marbles and those, their peers, that the boy afterwards wrought.

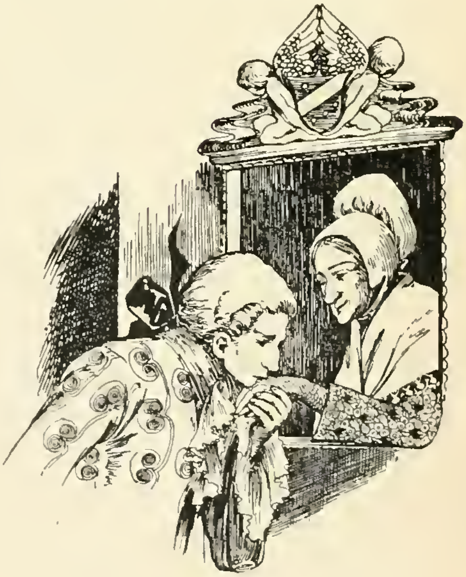

JUST THEN HIS MOTHER AWOKE. SHE MOVED THE CURTAIN ASIDE.

"All this was years ago, but only yesterday I shone upon an eastern bay of Denmark, where rolling woods sloped to the water's edge, with an old, brown feudal castle, and farther back a little town set in orchards. Torch-lit boats glided over the still water—not for fishing, but for festival, for music floated over the deep. In one of them stood a man, well-built, tall, whom the others waited on reverently. I knew the blue eyes, though the hair was white, and to my mind recurred the Vatican, and the Nile group, and the marble forms of the gods, while, mingled with them, came the vision of the garret, and little Bertel sitting in his shirt by the spinning-wheel. Yes, Bertel, Bertel Thorwaldsen, for the wheel has run full circle, and the gods again emerge from the stone."

NIGHT THE TWENTY-FOURTH

"Of all the buildings of Frankfort I noticed chiefly one—not Goethe's birthplace, nor the Stadhaus, with its barred windows and the great horns of oxen roasted whole at coronations; but a plain, citizen's house, near the old Jewry—the house of the Rothschild family. The stairway was lit up; bowing footmen, carrying wax tapers in massive silver candelabra, lined the stairs, while an old lady was carried down in a chair. Their master stood bareheaded, and reverently kissed her hand, his mother's hand. She nodded to the servants' greetings and to his, and was carried to a tiny house, where still she lived, where her sons had been born, where first fortune came to them. Should she leave the little house in its narrow lane, fortune, she believed, would leave her sons: and the belief was fixed."

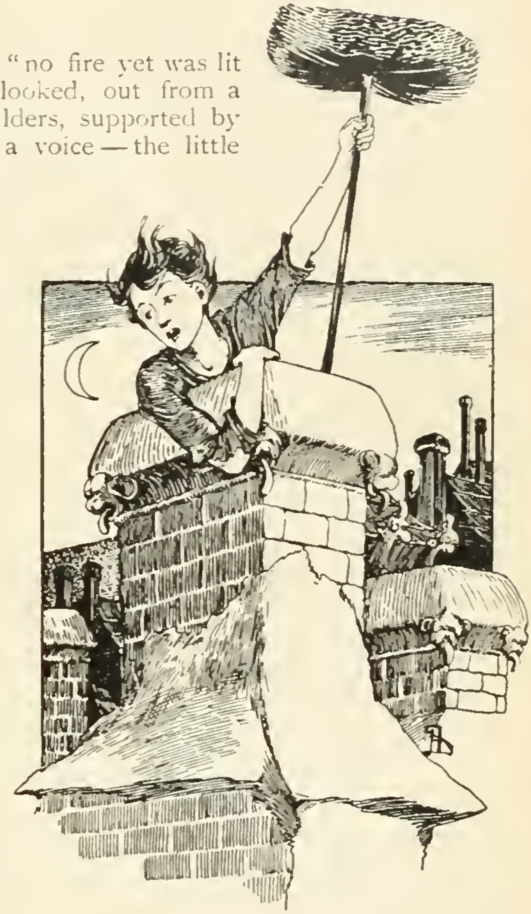
There was no more of the Moon's story, but I thought of it afterwards. A word, and a London West-End mansion, a villa on the blue Mediterranean, would have been the old dame's, but no; a superstition stood in the


THEIR MASTER STOOD BAREHEADED, AND REVERENTLY KISSED HER HAND, HIS MOTHER'S HAND.

way. "Should she leave the house, fortune, she believed, would desert her sons." A superstition, but one of a mother's heart.

NIGHT THE TWENTY-FIFTH

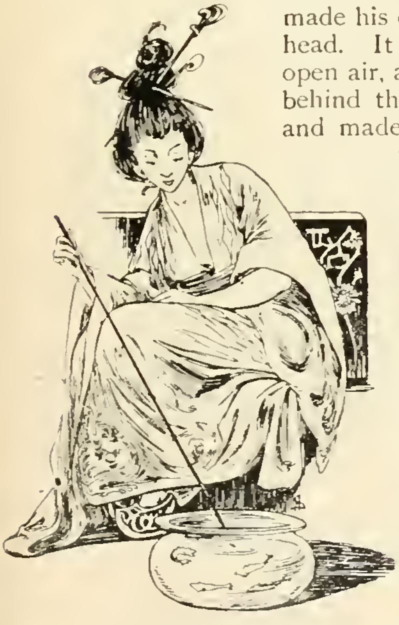
"Yesterday, at the break of day," said the Moon, "no fire yet was lit in the city, and no wreath of smoke rose up. As I looked, out from a chimney-pot popped a little head, followed by the shoulders, supported by the arms on the edge of the stack. 'Swe-e-ep,' cried a voice — the little chimney-sweeper's, who had just climbed the chimney and stuck his head out. 'Swe-e-ep, swe-e-ep.' Ever so much better than crawling about the dark, narrow flues, to have the keen fresh air blowing on you, and a glimpse of the green wood over the chimney-tops. The sun rose and shone full on his face, radiant with triumph through its cake of soot. 'Every one can see me now,' he shouted, 'and so can the sun and the moon! Swe-e-e-ep!' And he waved his broom."



"SWE-E-EP!" CRIED A VOICE—THE LITTLE CHIMNEY-SWEEPER'S, WHO HAD JUST CLIMBED THE CHIMNEY, AND STUCK HIS HEAD OUT.

NIGHT THE TWENTY-SIXTH

"My beams shone over China," said the Moon, "and were thrown back from the bare, unbroken walls of the city streets there. A door here and there to be seen, but bolted, for a Chinaman thinks nothing of the world outside. Heavy shutters hid the windows of the houses; only from the temple came a glimmer of light. Within, from floor to roof rose glaring pictures, gaudy with gilding, to represent the exploits of the gods. Metal idols, half hidden by folds of hangings and banners, stood with a little altar before each, decked with flowers and burning joss-sticks. Above them all stood the greatest god, Fo, dressed in silk of the sacred yellow. By his altar sat a young priest, apparently engaged in his ritual; but he had fallen into a train of thought which made his cheeks flush, and bowed his head. It was not the thought of the open air, and the little flower-garden behind the high wall, that held him, and made irksome the vigil before the lamps in the temple. It was not the thought of the rich man's table, with its luxuries, that passed through his mind, nor such a one that, if uttered, the laws of his nation would have visited with death. Nor did his fancy roam across the sea with the foreign barbarians to their homes in England. Not so far as that, but yet, even in the presence of the holy gods, his fancy strayed, and the wandering thought was sin. Whither it wandered I knew. Across the city rose a roof with china tiles, flat, bright with splendid vases of painted porcelain, and there sat a maiden. The small, sparkling eyes, the full lips, the tiny feet, made a Chinese beauty. The silken dress rustled as she raised her plump arm. She was sitting by a bowl of goldfish, and stirred the water with a stick of lacquer, stirred slowly, deep in thought. The bandaged foot pained her; but she felt only her pain of heart. The fish were bright with gold; they lived their undisturbed life in their globe, and were fed regularly. But what was that to freedom! She could feel that herself. Her fancy fled to the temple, but dwelt not on things concerning the gods. Poor lover, poor beloved! Their thoughts were with each other, but my cold light made severance between them like an angel's sword."



STIRRED SLOWLY, DEEP IN THOUGHT.

Night the Twenty-Seventh

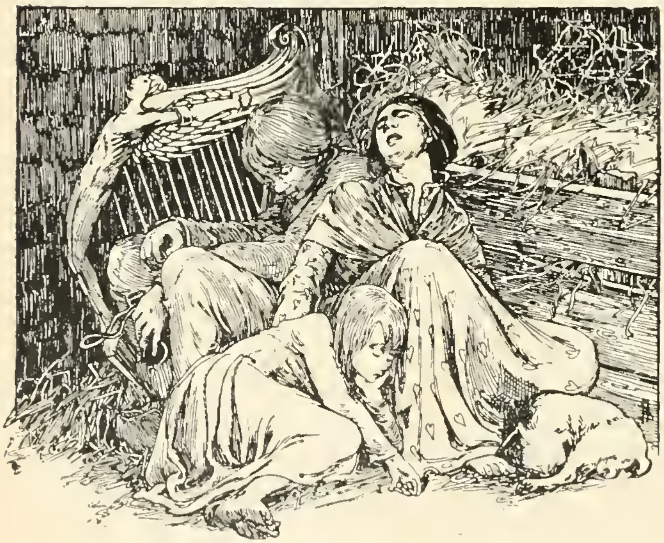
"A still night," said the Moon, "and the clear depths of space through which I moved were not more transparent than the sleeping lake below. Far down at the bottom were visible strange water-plants, whose branches waved upwards like great forest-trees, while through their tops darted the fish, the birds of the water-world. In the air, high up, a flight of wild swans sped swiftly. One of them was weary; lower and lower he sank, in failing flight, following with longing eyes his comrades' troop as it was lost in the distance. Slowly he sank, as a feather in still air, and at last floated lily-like upon the water, sleeping, his head beneath his wing. A breeze sprang up, and ruffled the calm water, till it gleamed with broken lights like the rushing clouds. The swan woke, and the glittering wavelets broke in fire against his breast. The clouds flushed red at the coming of morning, and he rose refreshed from the lake, and flew eastwards towards the blue cloud on the horizon, which was the goal of his flock. Lonely and longing he flew; longing and lonely over the sea."

Night the Twenty-Eighth

"Far away among dusk pine woods lies an ancient monastery, upon a gloomy river-bank of Sweden. Through the gratings of its church shone my rays, far into the spreading vaults, where each great stone sarcophagus holds a sleeping monarch. Above each is nailed to the wall a regal crown, the emblem of earthly greatness; but the crown is of painted lath, hung on a wooden nail. The gilded wood is worm-eaten, and from it swings the long banner of the spider's weaving, frail as the remembrance of man. How still their sleep, those men I recall so well, with the smile of kingly pride upon their lips! To-day the steamer moves like a magic shell over the fjords, and the stranger visits the vault. He asks the names of the kings, and they have an old world, unfamiliar sound. He marks the worm-pierced crowns with a smile, mingled with melancholy, if he is a man whose mind has a thoughtful bent. And the dead sleep quietly, remembered only by the moon whose beams shine nightly into the silent realm that is theirs, the narrow kingdom with the crown of lath!"

Night the Twenty-Ninth

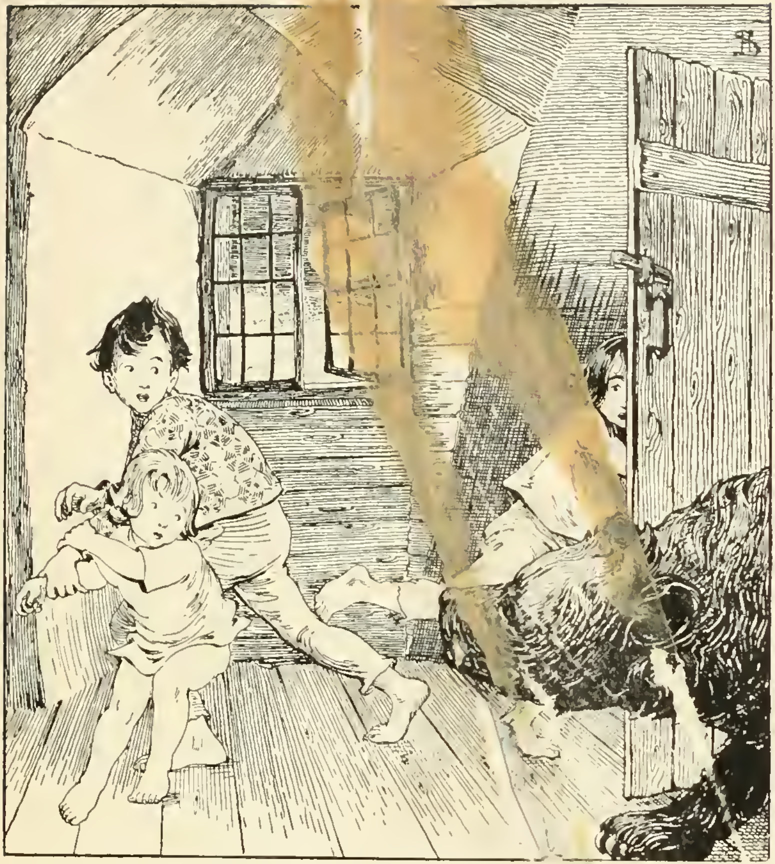
"An inn stands by the main road, with a great barn opposite, where the thatchers are repairing the roof of straw. Between the open rafters I could look down through the trap into the bare, comfortless space below. The great cock slept on the rafter; a saddle lay in the manger, and in the middle of the shed stood a travelling-carriage, its owner asleep within it, while a change of horses was made. The coachman stretched himself; he had slept well for half the stage preceding. The ostler's room had the door open, and the bed was tumbled. The candle on the floor had guttered down to the socket. The night was far advanced to morning, and the wind whistled cold through the shed. In it slept a troupe of strolling musicians, the harp at their head and the dog at their feet. The man and woman dreamed of the fiery spirit they had yet in the flask: the white-faced child dreamed, too, her lashes wet with unshed tears."



THE WHITE-FACED CHILD DREAMED, TOO, HER LASHES WET WITH UNSHED TEARS.

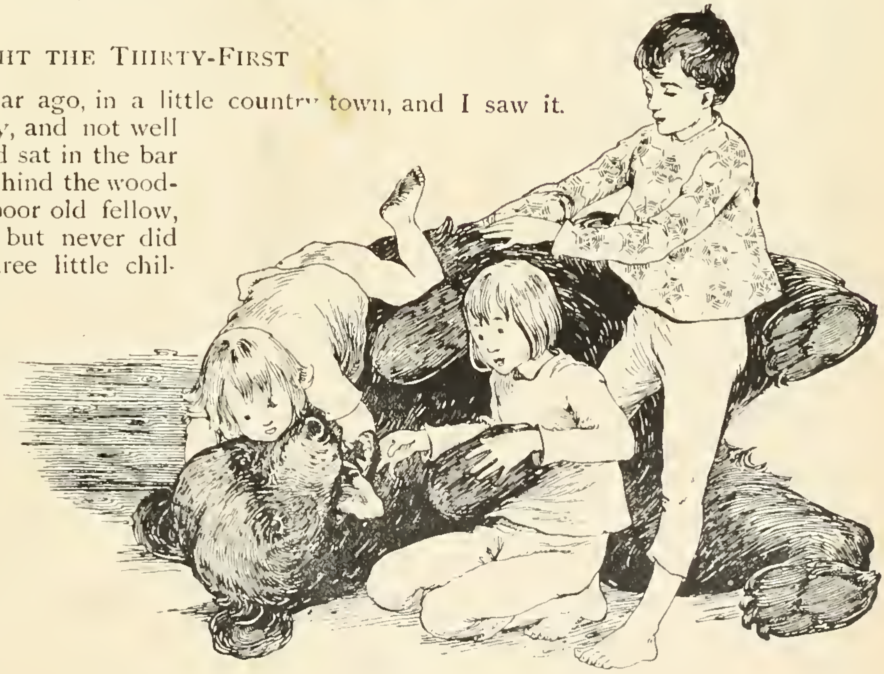
Night the Thirtieth

The Moon was seen but in glimpses, for the wind was bitter and boisterous, and storm-clouds rushed wildly by. "On just such a night," she said, "I looked down at the cloud-shadows chasing each other over the fields. A closed carriage stood at a prison-gate, and a prisoner was to be taken away. Through the barred window of his cell I looked, and saw him scratching some lines of farewell upon the wall—not words, but notes of music. The great gate opened, and he came out, gazing at my disc. I did not see his face, for a cloud intervened. The carriage-door closed, and the horses went off full-speed into a dark wood where my rays could not pierce; but through the prison-window I could see his farewell on the wall. Not all could I light up, but here and there a note, so most of what he wrote is unknown to me, whether a dirge or a pæan. Was he going to his death, or to freedom and the arms he loved? Not all the history of mortal man do I, the Moon, decipher."

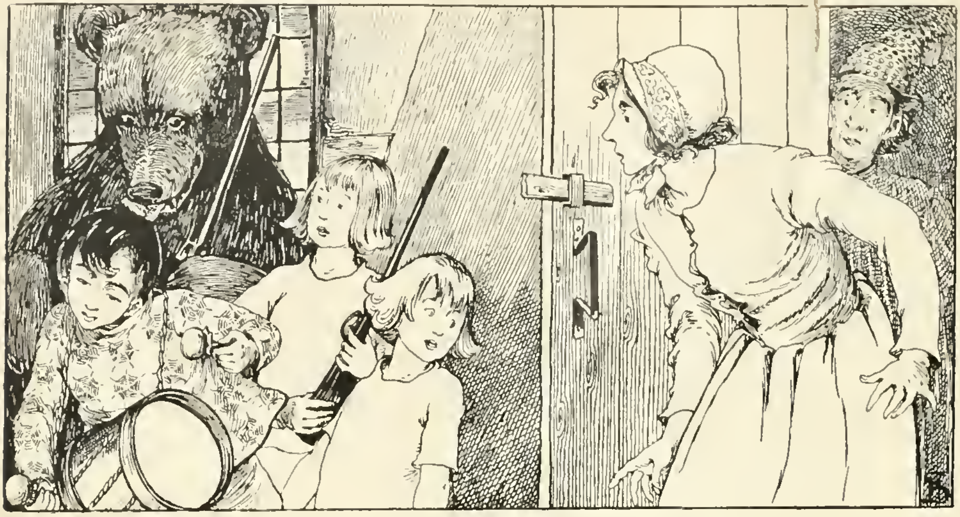

THEY CREPT INTO CORNERS OF THE ROOM, BUT HE FOUND EACH ONE, AND SNUFFED AT THEM, AND DID NO HARM.

NIGHT THE THIRTY-FIRST

"This took place a year ago, in a little country town, and I saw it. The papers had it in to-day, and not well told either. The bear-ward sat in the bar of the inn, at supper, and behind the wood-pile his bear was chained, poor old fellow, who looked fierce enough, but never did any harm. In the attic three little children, the oldest not more than six, the youngest barely two, were playing in my light, when Tramp, Tramp! somebody coming upstairs! Who was it? The door burst open, and there was the great, rough bear! Bruin had got tired of the yard, and had made his way upstairs, much to the terror of the children. They crept into corners of the


THE BEAR LAY DOWN, AND THE BABY CLIMBED ON HIM, AND HID HIS HEAD IN THE SHAGGY FUR.

room, but he found each one, snuffed at them, and did no harm. 'He's only a big dog,' they said, and patted him. The bear lay down, and the baby climbed on him, and hid his golden curls in the shaggy fur. By-and-by the eldest boy took his drum, and beat it; the bear rose upon its hind legs at the sound, and began to dance. Each child took a gun, and the bear must have one, which he held quite properly. So they began marching—Right, left; right, left! The door opened, and their mother appeared. Imagine her silent horror, her dead-white face, her mouth fixed open, her terrified stare! The baby nodded to her in huge delight: 'We is p'ayin' soldiers, mummy!' Then the bear-ward ran up."

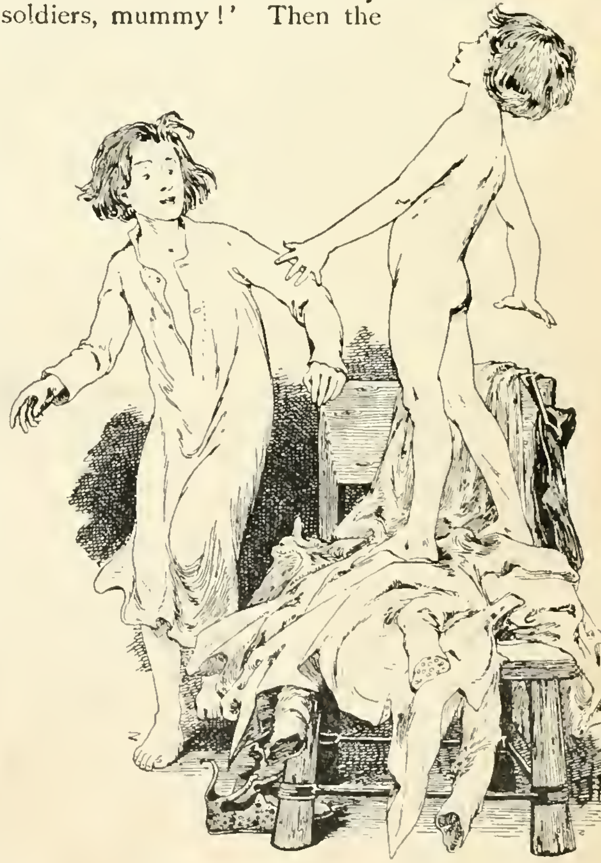


SO THEY BEGAN MARCHING—RIGHT, LEFT; RIGHT, LEFT!

Night the Thirty-Second

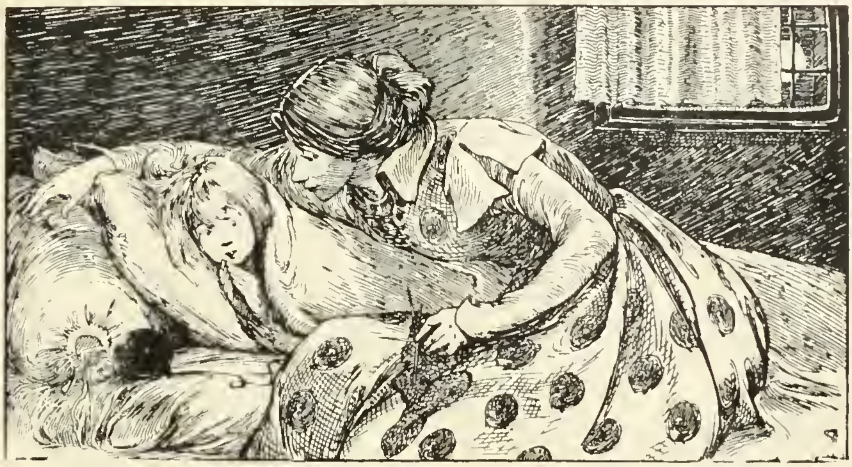
"I love babies," said the Moon; "they are so very quaint. I love to peep into the nursery when they are not thinking of me, and see them dressing and undressing. The little bare shoulder peeps out, then the arm; or the sock comes off, and a fat little leg shows, with a wee white foot for kissing, and I kiss it too. But my story. I was looking to-night through a window, the blind of which was up, for there is no house opposite. There is a whole troop of youngsters in the family, and a baby girl among them, only four, but she says her prayers as well as the others. Mother sits at her cot every night and hears her. Then a kiss, and mother waits till baby is asleep, which is usually the moment that the eyes close.

"To-night the two elder ones were somewhat noisy, one dancing about in his night-shirt, the other piling up the clothes round a chair, and making out that he was playing statues. The two next in order of age were laying the clean things in the linen-chest, the regular evening task. Mother sat by baby's cot and said, 'Hush! baby's going to say her prayers.' I peeped in, over to the baby's bed. There she lay under the snowy-white quilt, her hands quietly folded, and her little face grave. She said '*Our Father*' aloud. In the middle of it mother broke in. 'Baby,' she



PILING UP THE CLOTHES ROUND A CHAIR, MAKING OUT THAT HE WAS PLAYING STATUES.

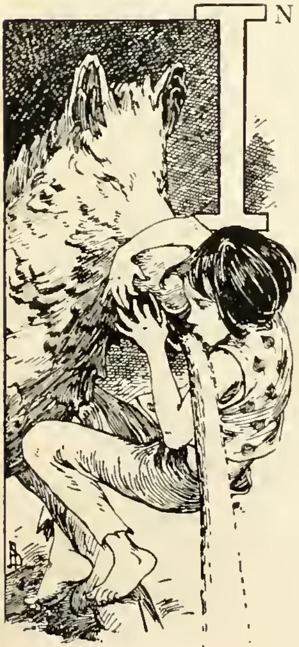
said, 'you say, "*give us our daily bread*," and then you put in something I don't quite catch. What is it?' The baby lay silent, and looked timidly at the mother. 'What is it you say?' repeated the mother. 'Don't be angry, mother dear; I only say, "*and a lot of butter, please!*"



"DON'T BE ANGRY, MOTHER DEAR; I ONLY SAY, 'AND A LOT OF BUTTER, PLEASE.'"

* * *

The Bronze Pig

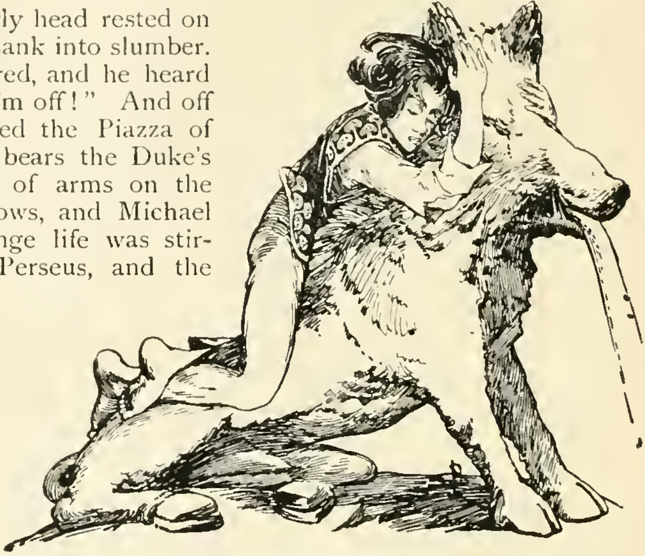


IN Florence, close by the Piazza of the Grand Duke, runs a little cross street called, if I am not mistaken, Porta Rosa. In it, and in front of a kind of market for vegetables, stands the figure of a pig in metal. Fresh, bright water gushes from the mouth of the creature, to which years have given a blackish-green colour, save that the snout shines as if it was polished, which is exactly what has happened to it at the hands of generations of children and *lazzaroni* (beggars), who lay hold of it, and put their mouths to the beast's muzzle to drink. It is a perfect picture to see some pretty, half-naked urchin clasp the shapely creature, and set his rosy lips to its jaws. The place is easy enough to find by any visitor to Florence. You have only to ask the very first beggar you meet for the Bronze Pig, and there you are.

It was a late winter evening; the mountain peaks were white with snow, but the moon was shining, and moonshine in Italy gives as good a light as the gloomy winter sun of the North; as good and better, for there the air glisters and buoys us up, while in the North the cold, grey, leaden pall weighs us down to earth—the cold, dark earth—that some day will lie heavy on our coffin.

In the grounds of the Grand Duke's palace, and under a lean-to roof, where in winter time the roses bloom in their thousands, a little ragamuffin had been sitting the livelong day, a boy who could stand as the very image of Italian life—pretty, smiling, and withal in distress. He was hungry and thirsty, but no one gave to him; and as dusk set in, and the grounds had to be closed, the gate-keeper turned him out. For some time he stood on the bridge across the Arno, dreamily gazing at the stars that sparkled in the water between him and the magnificent marble bridge named after the Trinity. Then he made his way to the Bronze Pig, there half knelt down, and with his arms thrown round it, laid his mouth to the shining muzzle, and drank the fresh water in great gulps. Right by its side lay some lettuce leaves and a chestnut or two; they formed his evening meal. Not a living soul but himself was in the street; it was his, and his only, so without hesitation he sat himself on the Bronze Pig's back, bent forward till his curly head rested on that of the animal, and ere he was aware of it, sank into slumber.

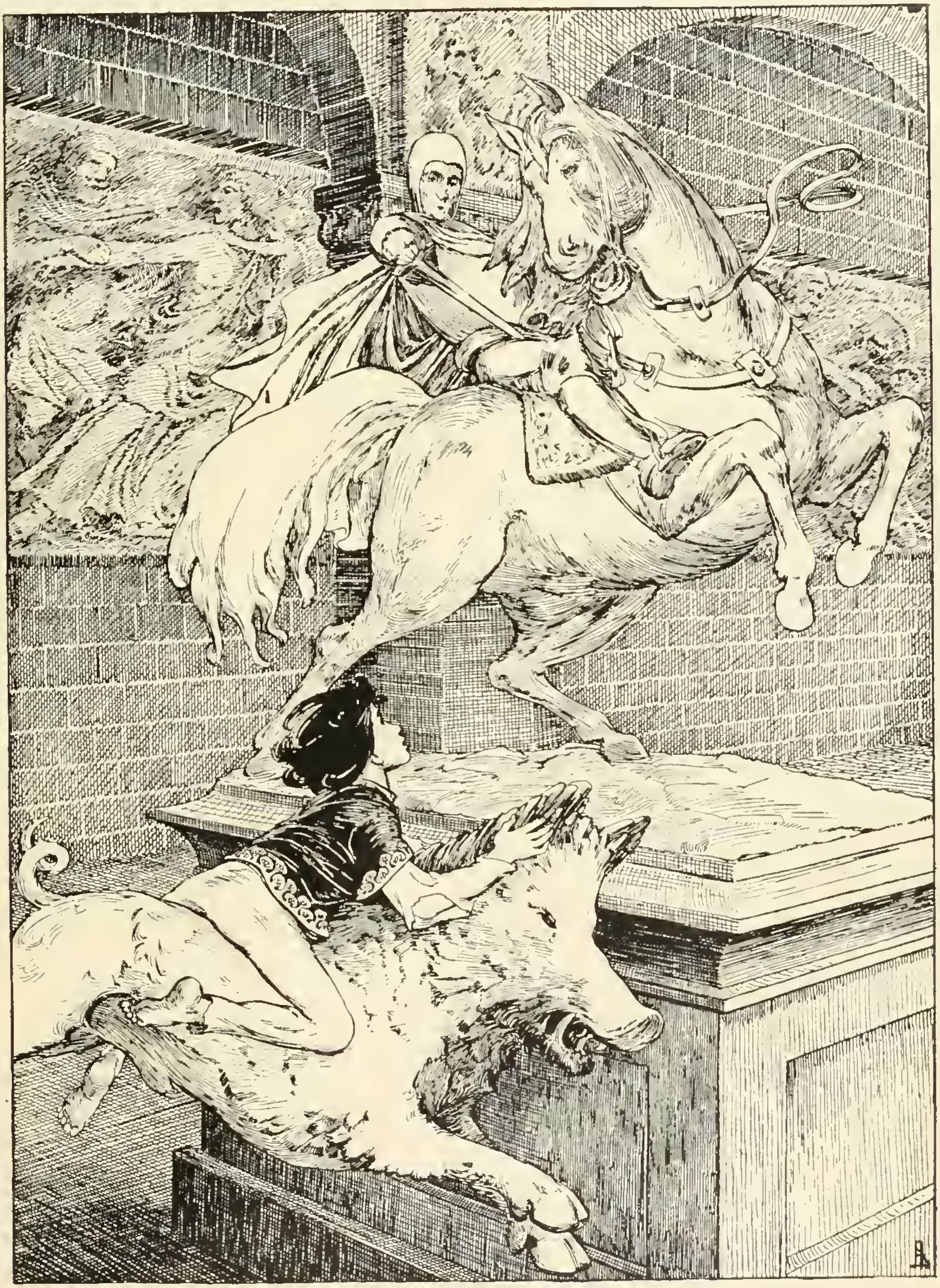
Midnight sounded. The Bronze Pig stirred, and he heard it say distinctly: "Ho, little boy, hold fast; I'm off!" And off it went on its magic ride! First they reached the Piazza of the Grand Duke, and the bronze horse that bears the Duke's statue neighed out loud; the coloured coats of arms on the old Town Hall shone like stained-glass windows, and Michael Angelo's "David" whirled his sling! A strange life was stirring all. The bronze groups representing Perseus, and the Rape of the Sabine Women, stood there like life; they uttered a cry of utmost terror, which rang round the magnificent square. The Bronze Pig halted by the Uffizi Palace, in the arched street, where the better class gather for the carnival. "Hold fast," said the creature, "hold fast! for up the stairs we go!" Trembling half with fear, half with delight, the little fellow spoke not a word.


HE SAT HIMSELF ON THE BRONZE PIG'S BACK . . . AND, ERE HE WAS AWARE OF IT, SANK INTO SLUMBER.

Their feet trod a long gallery, known already to the child. Its walls were bright with the painter's art; statues and busts stood around in as good a light as if it had been noon-day. But best of all was when the door of an ante-room flew open. The splendour within came back to the little fellow's remembrance, but on this night everything stood out in its fullest glory. Here, in naked beauty, stood a fair woman, fair as nature and the master-hand upon the marble could shape her. Her lovely limbs moved; dolphins gambolled at her feet, and immortality shone in her eyes. The world calls her the Medicæan Venus. By her side shine marble statues in which the very spirit of life has entered into the stone, the nude, graceful forms of manhood, one whetting a sword—the Sword-sharpener; a second group—the Wrestling Gladiators, their swords sharp, their combat for the Goddess of Beauty. The child was blinded by the brightness; the walls gleamed with colour, everywhere was life and movement. The form of Venus showed, in a second place, the Earthly Venus, so yielding, so ardent, as Titian clasped her to his heart. It was wonderful to see. There were two lovely women; their glorious, undraped limbs were stretched on soft cushions, their bosoms heaved, their heads moved, so that the luxuriant hair fell over the rounded shoulders, while the dark eyes spoke the glowing thoughts of the heart; not one, however, of the painted forms dared to step quite out of the frame. The Queen of Beauty, the Sword-sharpener, and the Gladiators remained in their places, for the glory which streamed from the figures of the Virgin, the Saviour, and St. John, restrained them. The holy figures were not images any longer; they were the holy persons themselves!

What brightness and beauty from room to room! The boy saw all, for the Bronze Pig moved stride after stride through all the kingly splendour. View after view crowded upon him; only one picture stamped itself on his heart, and that in particular because of the happy, fortunate children which it portrays. The little fellow had greeted them in day-time. Many pass the picture by unnoticing, and yet a veritable treasure of poetry is in it. It is Christ, descended into the world of the dead; not the lost souls, but the heathen. The picture is the work of the Florentine, Angioto Bronzino. Very beautiful is the emotion imprinted on the children's faces—the full assurance that they will reach heaven; two little things are already hugging each other, and one tiny fellow reaches a hand to another lower down than he, and points to himself as he says: "I am going to heaven!" The adults stand doubtful, hopeful, or else bending in adoration before Christ.

The boy's eyes dwelt longer on this picture than on any other, and the Bronze Pig stood still before it. A low sigh was heard—did it come from the picture, or from the creature's breast? The boy stretched out his hands to the laughing children; then the animal bore him forth, out through the open entrance. "All thanks and blessings to you, you lovely creature!" said the little fellow, and caressed the Bronze Pig, as it carried him down the stairs. "Thanks and blessings to you," said the Pig; "you have helped me no less than I you, for only with an innocent child on my back do I obtain the power to run. Yes, as you see, I am allowed to go even under

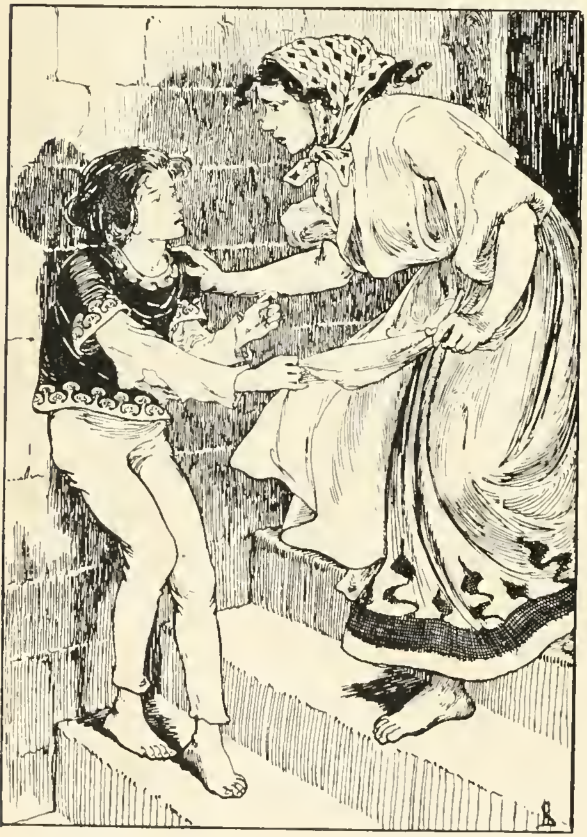


THE BRONZE HORSE THAT BEARS THE DUKE'S STATUE NEIGHED OUT LOUD.

the rays of the lamp burning before the Virgin, though not into the Church. But when you are with me, I may look in from the outside through the open door. Don't dismount from my back, for if you do, I shall lie lifeless as you see me by daylight in the Porta Rosa!"

"I'll stop with you, then, dear creature!" cried the boy. So off they went post-haste through the streets of Florence, out into the square before the Church of Santa Croce. The leaves of the doors flew open, light streamed through the church from the altar out to the lonely square. A marvellous blaze of light shone from a gravestone in the left aisle, and a thousand twinkling stars formed as it were a halo round it. An escutcheon glittered on the grave, a red ladder on a blue field that shone as with fire -the grave of Galileo. The monument is plain, but the ladder is a speaking token, the symbol, as it were, of art, whose path here always leads by a fiery ladder to the skies. All prophets of genius speed heavenward like the prophet Elijah. In the aisle of the church to the right every statue on the richly wrought tombs seemed endued with life. There stands Michael Angelo, and Dante, his brows bound with bays, and Alfieri, and Machiavelli. Side by side sleep those great men, the glory of Italy. It is a splendid church, more beautiful, though less in size, than the marble Cathedral of Florence. It seemed as if the marble draperies moved and the mighty forms raised their heads, and, amid the harmony of voice and organ, gazed up to the altar with its dazzling colours, where the white-robed acolytes swung golden censers, and the strong fragrance was wafted out of the church to the open air of the square.

The boy stretched his hand to the blaze of light, and in a twinkling the Bronze Pig was off full speed. He had to cling tightly; the wind sang in his ears. He heard the church door grate on its hinges as it closed; but in a moment his consciousness seemed to leave him; he felt an icy chill, and woke.



"WHAT DO YOU BRING BACK?" SHE ASKED THE BOY.

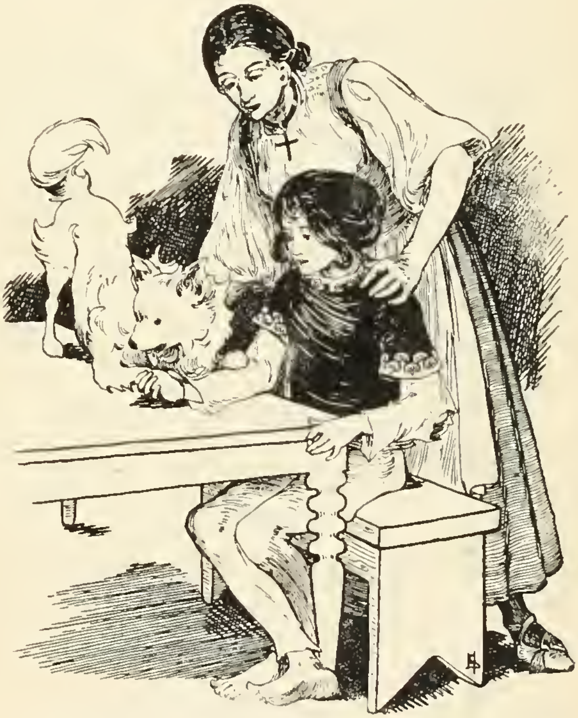
It was morning, and he was sitting, half slipping off the Bronze Pig, which was standing in its accustomed place in the Porta Rosa. Fear and foreboding seized on the child as he thought of her to whom he gave the name of mother, who had sent him out the day before to bring home money; for money he had none, and he was hungry and thirsty. Once more he threw his arms round the pig's neck, and kissed its snout, then, nodding to it, he turned off into one of the narrowest alleys where there was not room for a donkey to pass laden. A great iron-studded door stood half-open, through which he climbed a stone staircase with filthy walls, and a rope to serve as bannister, and came out on an open gallery hung with clouts. From it a stairway led down to the courtyard, where thick iron wires drew from the well to each floor of the house, and water-pails hung side by side. At times the roller groaned, and a bucket would spring into the air, till the water splashed into the yard below. Another tumbledown stone stair led still higher up. Two Russian sailors, coming from their night's debauch, sprang briskly down, and quite knocked the poor child over. They were followed by a woman, with jet black hair and past both her prime and her modesty. "What do you bring back?" she asked the boy. "Don't be angry," he answered; "I got nothing, nothing whatever," and he seized his mother's gown to kiss it. They passed into the small room; there is no need to describe it, save to say that it contained a *marito*, that is, an earthen pot with handles, and holding glowing charcoal. She took the pot in her arms, warmed her hands on it, and gave the boy a drive with her elbow. "You must have some money," she said. The child burst into tears, and she kicked him. He uttered a loud cry of pain. "Hold your tongue, will you? or I'll break your screeching head!" And she swung aloft the fire-pot she had in her hand. The child cowered on the ground with a scream. A neighbour entered the door, also with a *marito* in her hand. "What are you doing to the child, Felicita?" she said. "The child's mine," retorted Felicita; "I can murder him when I like, and you too, Giamina!" and she brandished her fire-pot. The other raised hers to protect herself, and the two vessels met with such violence that shards, fire, and cinders flew all over the room. At that very moment the boy was past the door, slipped across the court, and out of the house. Poor little fellow! he ran himself out of breath at last, and stopped by the church whose great doors had opened for him the night before, and in he went. All was bright, and the boy cast himself down at the first tomb on the right, the grave of Michael Angelo. Another moment, and he was sobbing out loud. People came and went; mass was sung, but no one noticed the boy, save that an old burgher stood still and looked at him, but then moved off like the others.

Hunger and thirst tormented the little fellow; he felt faint and sick. He squeezed himself into a nook between the marble monuments, and dropped off to sleep. Evening was coming on, when he was roused by a pull. He moved out, and the same old burgher stood before him. "Are you ill? Where's your home? Have you been here all day?" were some of the crowd of questions that the old man asked him. At his answers the old fellow took him to his own little house, hard by in a side street. They came to a shoemaker's workshop, where, as they entered, a woman sat busy at needlework. A little white Spitz dog, so clean-shaven that you could see his pink skin, was frisking about on the table, and jumped up at the boy.

"Innocent souls know each other," said the woman, and petted dog and child. The good folk gave him food and drink, and told him he would be allowed to stay the night with them, and next day Father Giuseppe would speak with his mother. It was a poor little cot that was given him, but to him who had been forced often to sleep on the hard, stony pavement, it was princely lying. Sweet was his slumber, and sweet his dreams of the gorgeous pictures and the Bronze Pig.

Next morning out went Father Giuseppe, and the poor child was anything but pleased, for he knew that it was to take him back to his mother. He kissed the little frisky dog, and the woman nodded to both.

What tidings did Father Giuseppe bring? He talked with his wife, and she nodded and patted the boy. "He's the best of boys," she said; "he can become a good glover, like yourself, for he has fine, lissom fingers. Our Lady has marked him out for a glover." So the boy stayed, and the woman herself taught him how to sew. His appetite was good, his sleep was sound; he grew frolicsome, and took to teasing Bellissima, as the little dog was called. But the woman shook her finger at him, and scolded him with some anger, which went to the boy's heart, and made him sit moping in his little room. This had an outlook on the street in which the hides were dried; iron bars were across the window. He could not rest; the Bronze Pig was always in his thoughts, and suddenly he heard outside a pitter-patter. There was his Pig, to be sure! He sprang to the window, but it was gone already; nothing was to be seen.



"INNOCENT SOULS KNOW EACH OTHER," SAID THE WOMAN, AND PETTED DOG AND CHILD.

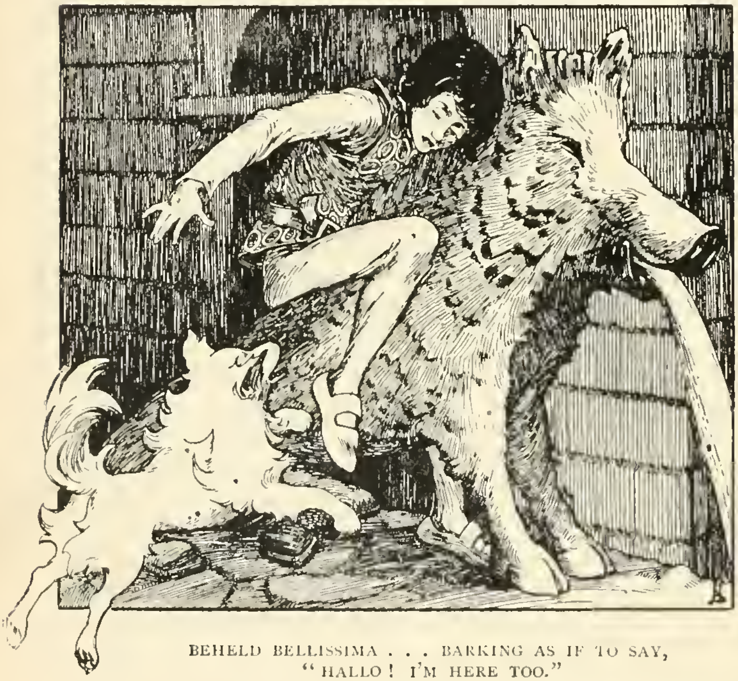
"Help the gentleman carry his paint-box," said Madame to him next day, as their lodger, a young artist, passed by, carrying his colours and a large roll of canvas. The boy took the box and followed the painter. Their way led to the Gallery and up the same stairway well known to the child since that night when he rode the Bronze Pig. He knew the statues and pictures, the lovely marble Venus, and the goddess of the painting; and again he saw the Virgin, the Saviour, and St. John.

They stopped before the picture by Bronzino's hand, where Christ is going down into the world of the dead, and the children round Him are laughing in their foretaste of heaven—the poor boy laughed too: he felt in his heaven here!

"Off home with you!" said the painter, as the boy still hung about when the other had set up the easel. "Mayn't I see you paint?" asked the boy. "Mayn't I look at you while you put the picture on the white canvas?" "I'm not painting yet awhile," said the man, and took a piece of charcoal. His fingers moved deftly; his eyes took in the great picture, and though there was only a thin outline to be seen, the figure of Christ stood there just as in the picture in colour.

"Off with you!" said the painter, and so the boy betook himself home, sat himself down at the table, and—learned to stitch gloves. But all day long his thoughts were in the picture-gallery, and so he was clumsy enough to prick his fingers, but did not tease Bellissima. At night, when the front door was open, he slipped out unnoticed. It was cold, but starlight, quite serene and lovely. He wandered off through the streets, already deserted, and soon reached the Bronze Pig, over which he bent, and kissed its shining snout, and climbed on its back. "You happy creature," said he, "I have so longed for you! We must take a ride to-night!"

The Bronze Pig made not a movement, and the fresh water streamed from its muzzle. The little fellow sat himself straddle-legged on its back. He felt a tug at his clothes; he looked, and beheld, Bellissima, little, close-shaven Bellissima, barking as if to say, "Hallo! I'm here too; why are you up there?" A fiery dragon could not have terrified the boy so much as the sight of the little dog in that place. Bellissima out in the street, and that too without being dressed, as the old mother called it! What must the consequence be? The dog did not stir out in winter without a little lambskin, cut out and stitched for him. The skin was decked with knots of ribbon and bells, and could fasten round the neck and under the body with red ribbon. The dog looked almost like a kid when, in winter, dressed like this, he got leave to trot out with his mistress. Bellissima out of doors, and not dressed! What ever would come of it? The boy's dreams vanished, but he kissed the Bronze Pig, and took Bellissima under his arm. The creature shivered with cold, and the boy took to his heels full speed.



BEHELD BELLISSIMA . . . BARKING AS IF TO SAY, "HALLO! I'M HERE TOO."

"What are you scampering off with?" shouted two *gendarmes*, whom he chanced upon, and Bellissima yapped at. "Where have you stolen that pretty little dog?" and they took it from him.

"Oh, give me him back!" begged the boy piteously.

"If you haven't stolen him, say at home that the dog may be called for at the watch-house." They told him the place, and off they went with Bellissima.

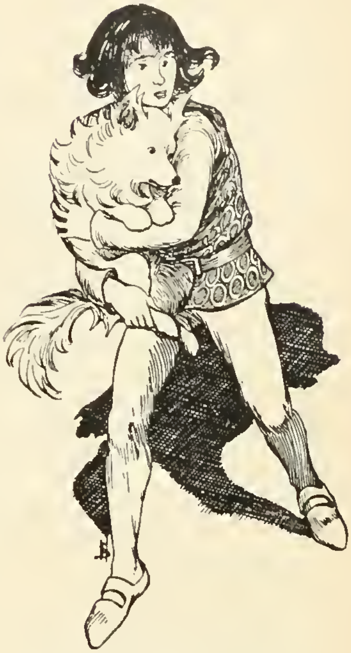
Here was a dreadful disaster! The boy did not know whether to jump into the river, or go home and tell everything; for they would surely kill him then, he thought. "But I'll gladly be killed; I'll die, and get to Jesus and Our Lady!"

The door was locked, and he could not get at the knocker; there was nobody in the street, but a stone was lying there, and with it he thundered at the door. "Who's there?" cried some one. "I," said the boy; "Bellissima is out; let me in, and then kill me!"

There was a regular hubbub, especially on Madame's part, for poor Bellissima! She looked instantly at the wall, where the dog's dress was generally hung, and there was the little skin!

"Bellissima in the watch-house!" she cried out. "You wicked boy! How did you get him out? He'll freeze to death! To think of the delicate little creature with those rough fellows!"

Father Giuseppe had to go at once; the woman bemoaned her dog, and the boy cried. Every one in the house came down, the artist included. He took the boy to his knee, and by questioning him, drew from him bit by bit the whole story of the Bronze Pig and the picture-gallery—which was certainly rather hard to comprehend. The painter comforted the boy, and tried to pacify the old dame, but she would not be satisfied till her husband came in with Bellissima, who had been among the soldiers. Then there was high glee, and the painter petted the boy, and gave him a handful of pictures, such splendid pictures, such funny heads, and among them, really and truly, in his own shape, was the Bronze Pig! Nothing could be more splendid! By a stroke or two he stood there on the paper, and even the house behind him was there. He who could draw and paint could call the whole world round him!

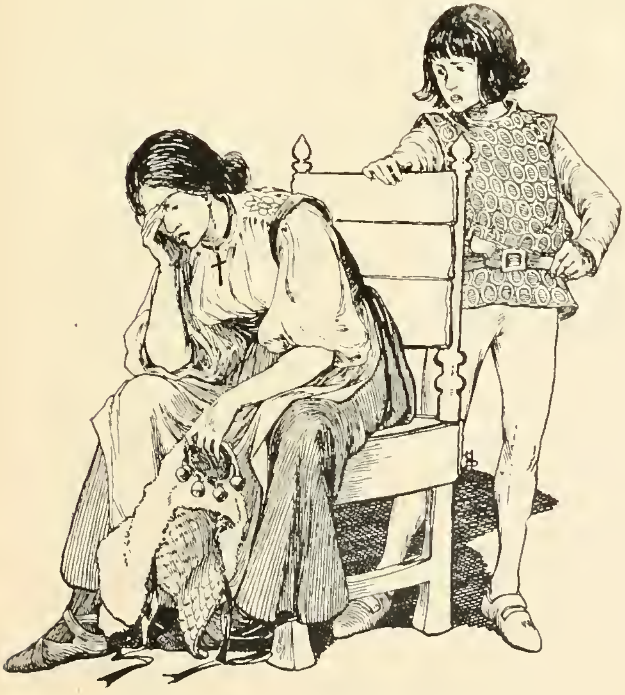


THE CREATURE SHIVERED WITH COLD, AND HE TOOK TO HIS HEELS FULL SPEED.

The first moment he was alone next day, he took a lead-pencil, and on the clean side of the picture attempted to reproduce the drawing of the Bronze Pig. He did it! True, it was crooked, all up and down, one leg fat, one thin, but it was easy to recognise, and he was delighted with it. He could quite see that the pencil would not go exactly as it ought; but next day a Bronze Pig again stood by the other's side, and this was ever so much better; and the third was so good already that anybody could recognise it.

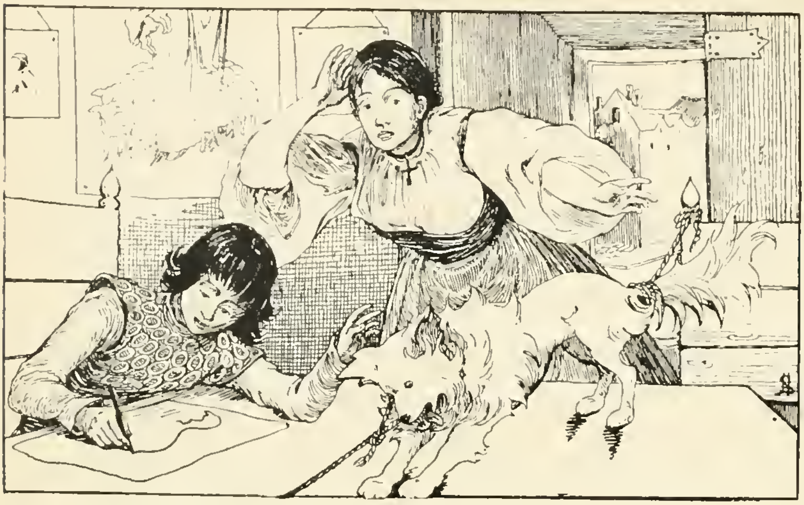
But it went badly with the glove-making, and the bespoke orders got on slowly, for the Bronze Pig had taught him that all pictures can be put on paper, and Florence itself is one big picture-book, if one wants pages. In the Piazza del Trinita stands a slender column, and on it the Goddess of Justice, with blindfold eyes, and a balance in her hand. Soon she was standing on the paper, and it was the glover's little lad who had set her there. The collection of pictures grew, but it did not contain anything but drawings of inanimate things, till one day Bellissima came frisking round. "Stand still," said the boy, "then I'll make you beautiful and put you in my collection." But Bellissima wouldn't stand still, and had to be tied up. Head and tail were tied, but he barked and jumped, so the string had to be tightened. Then in came our old dame. "You bad, bad boy! The poor little creature!" was all she could utter. Then she found her tongue, spurned the boy away with her foot, banished him from the house, called him an ingrate, a good-for-nothing, a thoroughly bad child, and wept and kissed her half-throttled Bellissima!

At that instant downstairs came the painter; and here is the turning-point of the tale.



THE WOMAN BEMOANED HER DOG, AND THE BOY CRIED.

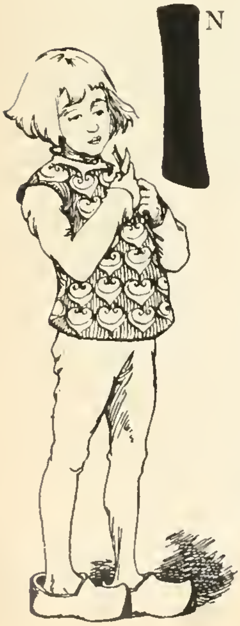
In the Academy of Arts at Florence in 1834, there was an exhibition, at which two pictures, hung side by side, attracted a crowd of spectators. In the smaller was portrayed a bright little boy, sitting to draw from a model—a little white Spitz dog, shorn in a fashion of its own; but the creature would not stand still, and so was fastened head and tail. There was a life and reality in the picture that appealed to everybody. The painter, it was whispered, was a young Florentine, who had been found, a street-waif, and had been brought up by an old glover, and then had taught himself to draw. A now-famous painter had discovered the boy's talent just as the child was going to be sent away for tying up the old dame's pet, the little Spitz dog, and using it as his model.


"YOU BAD, BAD BOY! THE POOR LITTLE CREATURE!" WAS ALL SHE COULD UTTER.

The glover's lad had become a great painter, as this picture gave proof, and still more the larger picture by its side. In this was only one figure—a ragged but handsome boy, asleep in the street, reclining on the Bronze Pig in the Porta Rosa. Every one knew the spot. The little fellow's arms rested on the Pig's head, and he was fast asleep. The lamp before the picture of the Madonna threw a strong, effective light on the pale but fine features of the child. It was a most beautiful picture. It was set in a deep gold frame, from a corner of which hung a laurel-wreath but through the green leaves wound a black ribbon, and a crape mourning-band drooped from it, for the young painter, but a day or two ago, had died.

* * *

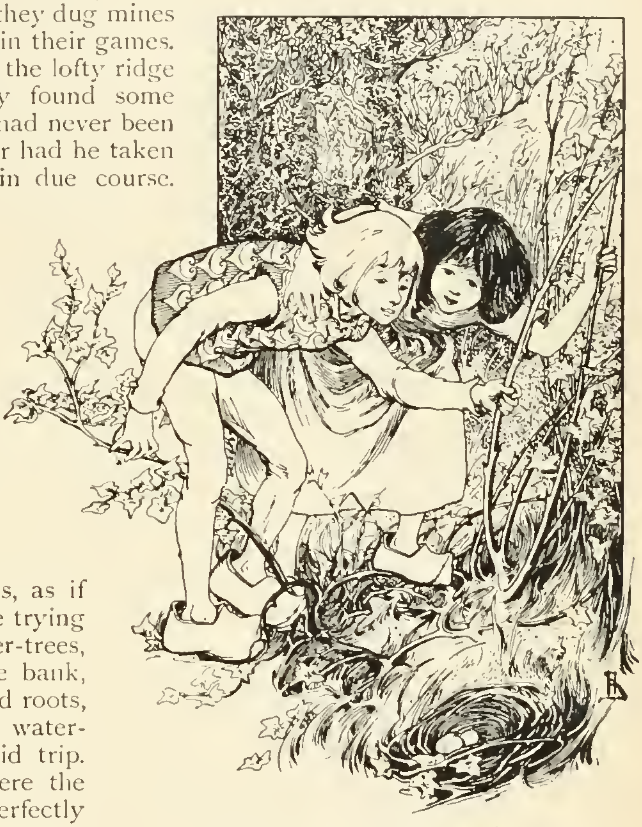
Ib and Little Christine



IN the woodland that lines the banks of the bright stream Gudenan, in Upper Jutland, and stretches deep into the country, rises a great ridge of land that runs like a wall through the forest. On this ridge, to the westward, lies a farm house set in ploughed fields of barren land, sandy soil peering through the scanty rye-blades and barley-stalks that grow there. This was all some years ago. The people that used to live there tilled the fields, and had also three sheep, a pig, and two oxen; in short, they made a decent living, that is, they had enough for necessaries, taking one thing with another. They might even have got together enough to keep two horses, but they said, as the other peasants of the district did: "The horse eats itself"; it consumes as much as it earns. Jeppe Jäns tilled his land in summer; in winter he made sabots, and he had then an assistant, a lad, who understood as well as he did how to make the wooden shoes strong but light, and withal "modish." They cut out shoes and spools, and it all brought grist to the mill. You would have done Jeppe Jäns' family wrong to call them poor folk. Little seven-year-old Ib, the only child of the house, would sit close by watching the workers, and would whittle a stick, or occasionally, his finger. But one day Ib did so well with two pieces of wood that they really made two little wooden shoes, and of these he wanted to make a present to little Christine. And who was little Christine? She was the boatman's daughter, delicate and tender as a child of gentle parents. Had she been dressed accordingly you would never have believed that she came from the hut on the moor hard by. There lived her father, a widower, who got his living by carrying faggots in his big boat from the forest to the neighbouring estate of Silkeborg, with its great eel-traps and weir, and sometimes even as far as the more distant little town of Randers. He had nobody to take little Christine in charge, owing to which the little girl was almost always by his side in his boat, or in the woodland among the heather and bilberry bushes. If he had suddenly to go to the town, he would bring Christine, who was a year younger than Ib, to stay at Jeppe Jäns' house.

Ib and Christine agreed on all points. When they were hungry, they shared their bread and berries; they dug mines in the earth, they ran and crawled everywhere in their games. One day they went together, by themselves, up the lofty ridge and a long way into the wold. There they found some snipe's eggs—a great event in their lives. Ib had never been on the moor where Christine's father lived, nor had he taken a trip on the river, but this was to follow in due course. Christine's father gave him an invitation to do so, and one evening he went with them over the moor to their house.

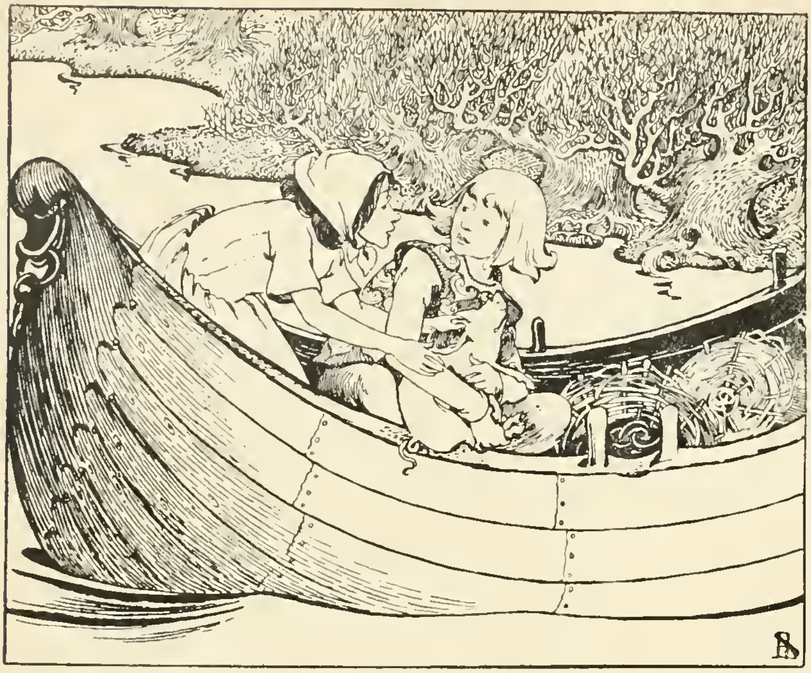
Next morning, at daybreak, the two children were seated in the boat on the faggots, and eating bread and bilberries. Christine's father and his assistant poled the boat along; they had the stream with them, and their course was rapid down the river, and through the lakes formed by it, which often seemed enclosed by woodland, sedge, and bulrushes, but their course through always appeared, though the ancient trees bent forward over the flood, and the oaks stretched out their bare boughs, as if they had turned up their shirt sleeves, and were trying to show their gnarled, naked arms. Old elder-trees, which the stream had floated away from the bank, clung to the soil of the banks with their matted roots, and looked liked little woody islands. The water-lilies swayed on the stream. It was a splendid trip. At last the great eel-weir was reached, where the water rushed through the sluice, and this was perfectly lovely, thought Ib and little Christine.


THERE THEY FOUND SOME SNIPE'S EGGS—A GREAT EVENT IN THEIR LIVES.

There was no factory or town there in those days, only the huge old farmstead with its scanty acres under tillage, a farm-hand or two, and a few head of cattle. The rush of water through the sluice, and the cry of wild duck, were all that betokened life at Silkeborg. When the faggots were unloaded, Christine's father bought a bundle of eels and a dead sucking-pig, which were thrust into a basket, and put all together in the boat. Then they started homewards against the stream, but the wind was with them, and when the sails were set it was as good as having a pair of horses in harness.

When they reached the place up stream where the boatman's assistant lived, a little way inland from the bank, the boat was tied up, and the two men landed, after impressing on the children the necessity of sitting still. But that was just what the children did not do, or if they did, it was for a very short time. They must needs poke into the basket where lay the eels and the pig, and get the pig out, hold it in their hands, feel it, and touch it; and, as both wanted it at once, the result was that they let it fall into the water, and the sucking-pig floated away down stream! Here was a dreadful thing!

Ib jumped out on the bank, and ran a little way from the boat. Christine jumped after him, crying, "Oh, take me too!" In a minute or two they were deep in the bushes and out of sight of the boat and the shore. They ran a little farther on, till Christine fell on the ground and began to cry. Ib got her to her feet again. "Come along," he cried, "there's the house!" But the house did not lie over there. They wandered farther and farther, over the dry rustling leaves of last year, and fallen branches that snapped under their little feet. Soon they heard a loud, piercing screech.

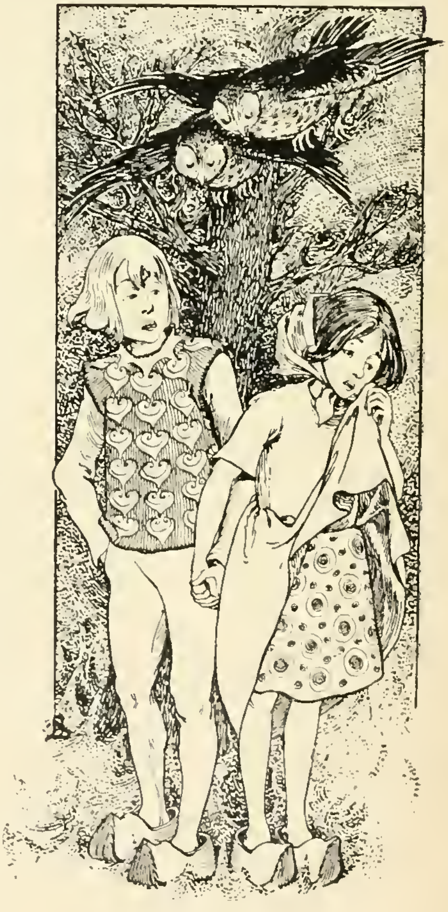


AS BOTH WANTED IT AT ONCE, THE RESULT WAS THAT THEY LET IT FALL INTO THE WATER.

They stood still, listening. It was an eagle's bark, that soon again shrilled through the woodland, a hideous cry that terrified them. But at their feet, in lavish exuberance throughout the wood, grew the most lovely blueberries, so enticing that the children simply had to stop, and did so, eating the berries till mouths and cheeks alike were blue. But again they heard the same cry as before. "That's for the pig," said Christine. "Come, we'll go to our house," said Ib. "It's here in the wood." And on they went. They came to a path leading out, but it did not take them to the house; and darkness was coming on, and they were afraid. A wonderful stillness reigned around, broken now and then by the hideous cries of the great horned owl and other birds. At last they were quite lost in the bushes. Christine began to cry, nor could Ib restrain his tears. After they had spent some time crying, they lay down on the dry leaves and fell asleep.

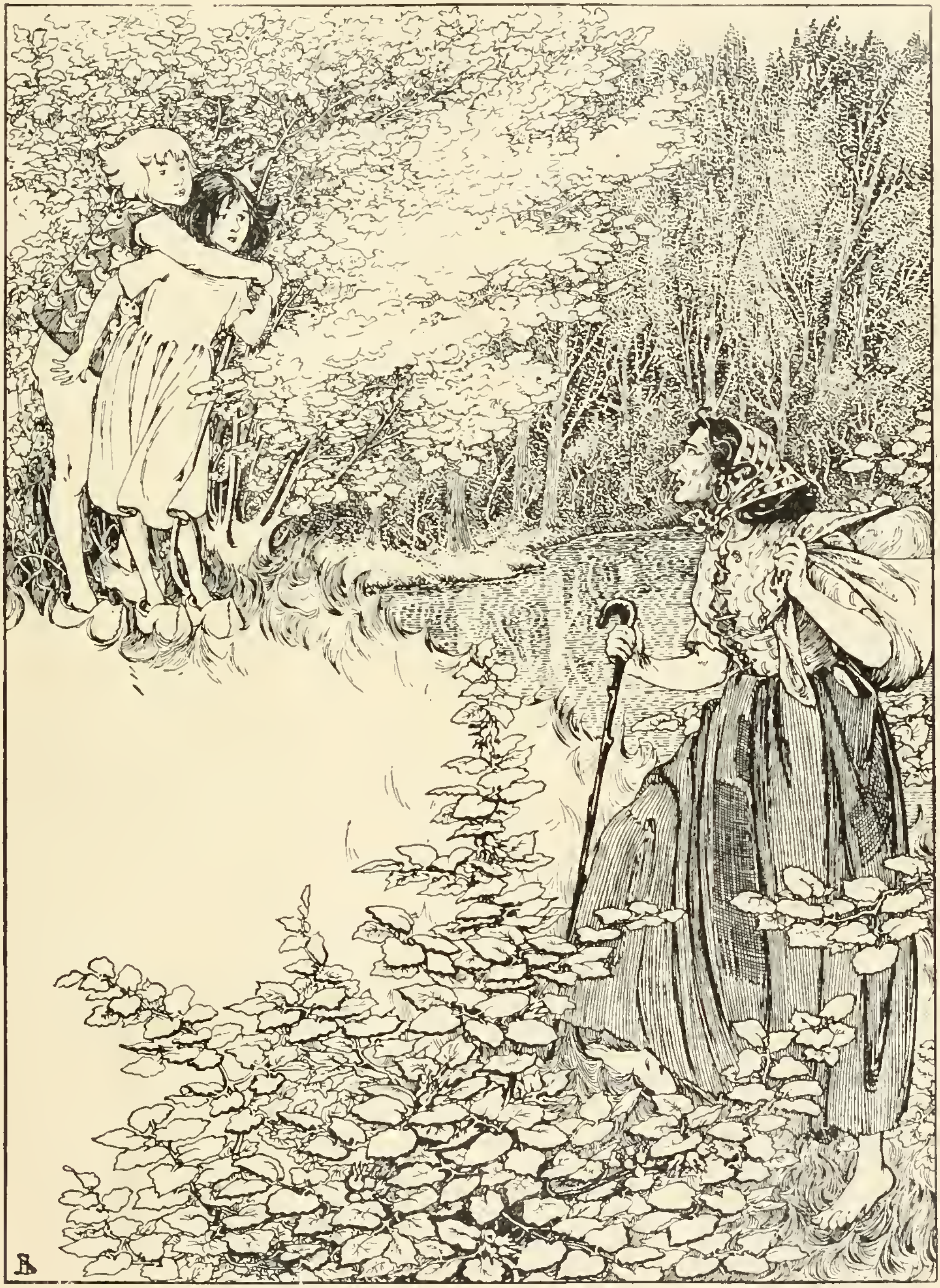
The sun was high in the heavens when both children awoke. They were cold, but near where they had slept, on the little hill, the sun was streaming through the branches, and there they had a mind to warm themselves again, and thence, Ib thought, they would be able to recognise his parents' house. But they were far away from that, in quite another part of the woodland. They climbed this hill, and found themselves on a slope falling away to a clear, transparent lake. Fish swam by shoals in the mirror-like water, lit up by the sunbeams. The sight came as unexpectedly on them as a thunderclap. But right at their elbow grew a hazel-tree, covered with splendid nuts, and they gathered them and cracked them, eating the sweet young kernels, as yet scarcely formed. But there was still another surprise and another fright in store for them. Out of the bushes came a tall old woman, with jet-black, glossy hair, the white of her eyes shining like a negro's. On her back she had a bundle, and in her hand a knotted stick. She was a gipsy. The children for a moment did not understand what she said. She took three big nuts from her pocket, saying that in them lay the loveliest, the most splendid things, for they were Wish-Nuts. Ib looked at her, and her tone was so friendly that he summoned up courage enough to ask her if she would give him the nuts. The woman did so, and pulled a pocketful more for herself from the bush.

Ib and Christine looked at the Wish-Nuts with big, round eyes. "is there a carriage and pair in this one?" asked Ib.



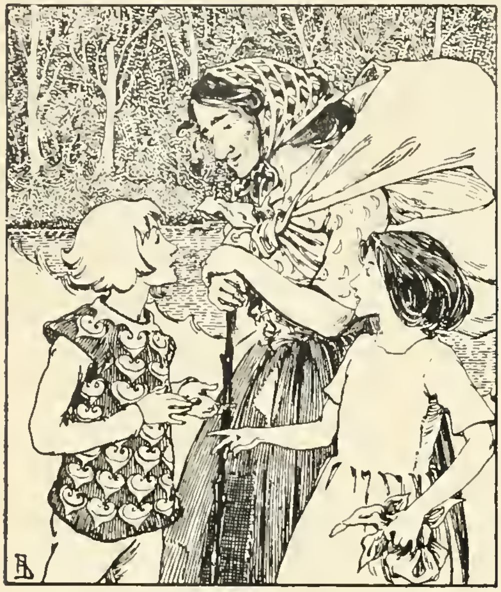
AT LAST THEY WERE QUITE LOST IN THE BUSHES.

"Yes, a golden coach with golden horses," answered the woman. "Then give me the nut," said little Christine. Ib gave it her, and the foreign woman knotted it into her kerchief. "Is there a pretty little kerchief in this nut," said Ib, "like the one Christine has on her neck?" "A dozen such," said the woman, "and fine clothes, stockings, hat and cloak and all." "Then I'll have that too!" cried Christine, and Ib gave her the second nut. The third was a little black thing.



ON HER BACK SHE HAD A BUNDLE, AND IN HER HAND A KNOTTED STICK—SHE WAS A GIPSY.

"You must have that," said Christine, "and it's so pretty too." "And what is in it?" said Ib. "The best of all for you," answered the gipsy. So Ib kept tight hold of the nut.



"YOU MUST HAVE THAT," SAID CHRISTINE, "AND IT'S SO PRETTY TOO."

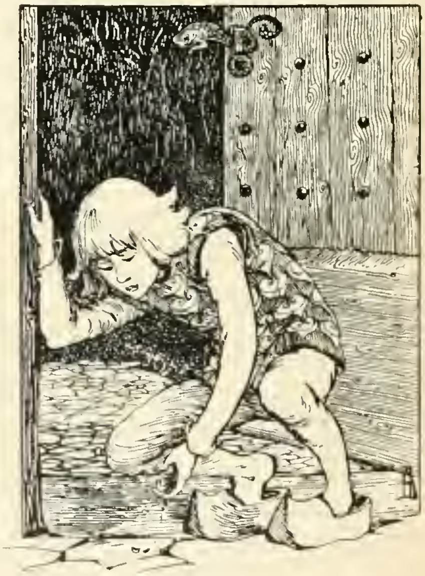
The gipsy said she would set the children in the right path for them to get home, so on they went, certainly in quite another direction from that they would have taken, but that is not sufficient reason for saying behind the old woman's back that she wanted to steal the children. On this wild woodland path they met the forest-keeper, who knew Ib, and by his help the two children were got to their homes, where had been the greatest anxiety on their behalf. All was forgotten and forgiven, though they had deserved punishment—first, for letting the pig drop into the water, and then, for running away.

Christine was taken to her father's home on the moor, and Ib stayed in the farm on the edge of the woodland, on the ridge of hill. The first thing he did was to get out the little dark nut in which lay "the best of all" for him. He set it in the hinge of the door, and broke the shell by shutting the door, but there was little inside. It seemed full of snuff, or black mould, for it was worm-eaten. "Just as I thought," said Ib. "The best of all couldn't be inside a little nut! And Christine will get about as much out of hers, neither fine clothes nor golden carriage!"

Winter came, and the new year, and year after year flitted by. Ib was now to be confirmed, and so he spent one winter with the clergyman, in preparation, in the next village, some distance off. About the same time the boatman came to Jeppe Jäns' house, and told them that Christine was to go into service, and had been lucky enough to get a good place with trustworthy people. "She is to go to the rich innkeeper's at Herning," he said, "many miles off westward. She will help the landlady look to the house, and if she suits, and stays there to be confirmed, they will take her as their own daughter. Just fancy!" Ib and Christine said good-bye. The folk called them "troth-plight," and when she went, Christine showed Ib the two nuts he had given her years before, when they were lost in the forest. She told him, too, that she still kept stored away the little clogs he had carved for her as a gift in the days of their childhood. Then they parted.

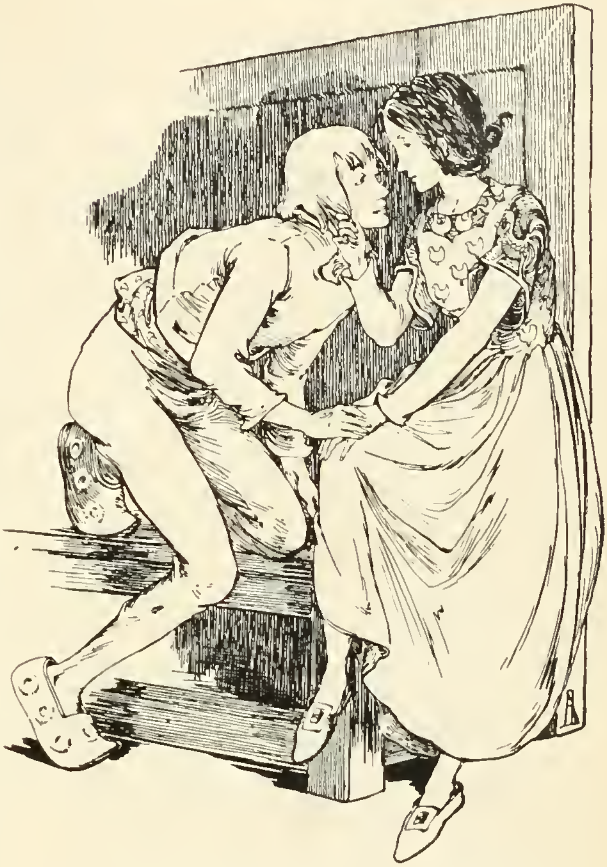
Ib's confirmation was over, but he stopped in his mother's house, being a clever maker of wooden shoes, and in summer he saw to the tillage, unaided, for they kept no farm-labourer, and his father was dead some years. Every now and then he heard of Christine from some passing post-boy or fisherman. She was in clover at the rich innkeeper's, and after her confirmation she wrote to her father, with a greeting to Ib and his mother. The letter also said something about new clothes, a present from her place, and that was pleasant to hear.

One day next spring, there was a knock at the door of Ib's old mother, and in came the boatman and Christine. She was on a day's visit. A waggon had been sent from the inn at Herning to the neighbouring village, and she had taken the chance of seeing her friends. She looked as fine as a great lady, with a pretty gown on, well cut, and made to fit her. There she was in fine attire, and Ib in his workaday things. He could not get a word out; he took her hand and kept it in his own, and was glad, but he could not



HE SET IT IN THE HINGE OF THE DOOR AND BROKE THE SHELL . . . BUT THERE WAS LITTLE INSIDE.

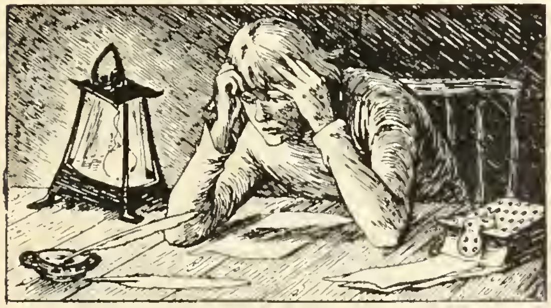
frame his lips to what he wanted. Christine, however, knew it, and did the talking, and kissed Ib on the lips. "Did you know me then, Ib?" she said; but afterwards, even, when they were left to themselves, and he stood with her hand in his, all he had to say was: "You are grown into a fine lady, and I such a clown! How I have called you and old times to mind, Christine!" And up the great ridge they wandered, arm in arm, and gazed out over to the moor across the stream, to the great hills overgrown with furze; but Ib said nothing. As they parted it seemed sure beyond doubt to him that Christine must become his wife. As children they had been called "troth-plight"; and it seemed to him they were really so, though neither had said a word about it.



"DID YOU KNOW ME THEN, IB?" SHE SAID.

They had only a short time left together, for Christine had to go to the neighbouring village, where the waggon was to start next morning for Herning. Her father and Ib went that far with her. It was a lovely moonlight night, and when they got to the village, and Ib still held Christine's hand in his, he could not bring himself to let her go; his eyes sparkled, but the words came lamely from his lips, though they came from his very heart: "If you are not grown too fine, Christine, and can bring yourself to live in my mother's house as my wife, man and wife will we be—but we can let that bide awhile." "Yes, Ib, we will wait awhile," said Christine. She pressed his hand, and he kissed her on the lips. "I trust you, Ib," said she, "and I think I have love for you, but I will think over it." So they parted.

On the way back, Ib told the boatman that Christine and he were as good as betrothed, and the other replied that so he had always looked for it to be. He went home with Ib and stayed the night, and nothing more was said about the betrothal.



SO HE SET HIMSELF TO WRITE, BUT THE WORDS WOULD NOT COME.

A year went by, in which two letters passed between Christine and Ib—'True till death,' was the signature. One day the boatman came to Ib and brought him greeting from Christine; the rest of his communication came out with some hesitation, but this was the drift of it. Christine was doing well, and more than well; she was now a pretty girl, sought after and loved. The innkeeper's son was in some big office in Copenhagen, and had been home for a time, and taken a liking to Christine, which she returned. The parents would not say no, but it was the wish of Christine's heart that Ib should think well of her, and so she was about to refuse her good-luck. Ib said not a word, but he turned as white as a sheet, and shook his head a little. "Christine must not thrust this fortune on one side," he said. "Well, write her a word or two,' said her father. So he set himself to write, but write he could not, the words would not come, and he crossed it out and tore it up. Next morning, however, a letter lay ready for Christine. Here it is:—

"The letter you wrote your father has been read by me, and it shows me that you are prosperous in all respects, and that you may reach higher still. Question your heart, Christine, and ponder carefully what awaits you as my wife, for all I have is but little. Do not think of me, or how I am placed, but think of your own well-being. You are bound to me by no troth, and if you have given me such in your heart, I set you free from it. May joy shower treasures of abundance upon you, Christine. The good God will give comfort to my heart.

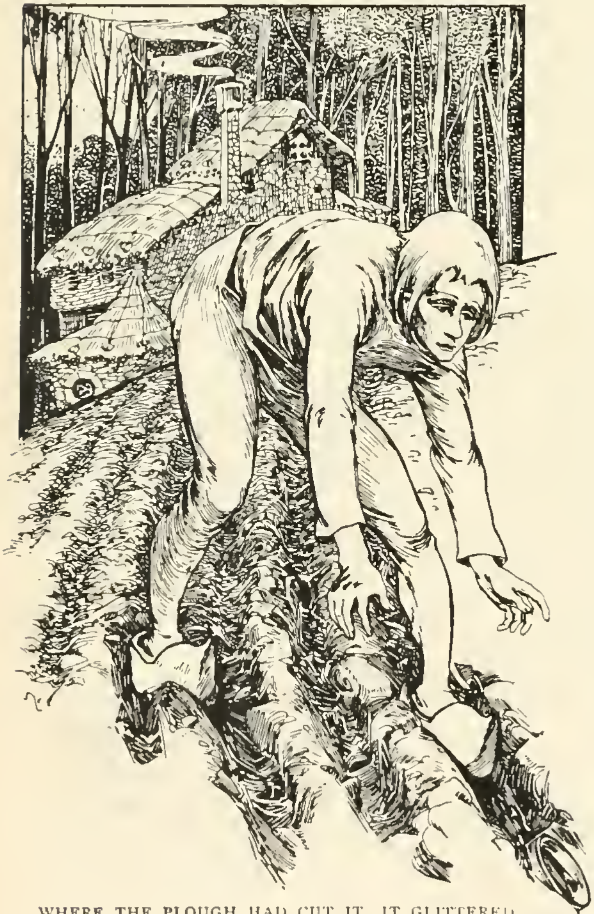
"Ever your true friend,
"IB."

The letter was sent, and Christine had it in due course. During that November the banns were published in the church on the moor and also in Copenhagen, where her bridegroom lived, and to Copenhagen she went with his mother, as he could not make the long journey into Jutland because of business. Christine met her father in a village on her way, and there they said good-bye. Some casual mention was made of this, but Ib said nothing. His old mother said he had grown very pensive. And, indeed, he had, which explains why the memory recurred to him of the three nuts given him as a child by the gipsy, two of which he had given Christine—the Wishing-Nuts, in one of which lay the golden carriage and pair, and in the other, the splendid clothes. True, was it not? all this splendour would be Christine's now in the city. Her share was right, while to Ib the nut had given only black earth. "The best of all for him," the gipsy had said; yes, that was right, that was coming to pass; the black mould was best for him. He understood clearly the woman's meaning; in the black mould, in the darkness of the grave was the best of all for him!

Years passed, not many, but years of years to Ib. The old innkeeper died, and his wife, one after the other, and all their property, some thousands of thalers, fell to the son. Now the golden coach and fine dresses were Christine's, sure enough. Two long years followed, but no letter from Christine, and when at last one from her did reach her father, it had not been written in prosperous and happy days. Poor Christine! neither she nor her husband had known how to keep within the limits of moderation; their money brought little blessing, for they sought none.

The heather bell bloomed, and withered again; the snow had already fallen for many winters over the moor and over the ridge behind which dwelt Ib, sheltered from rough winds. The sun was warm again, and Ib was driving the ploughshare through his fields when, as he thought, it cut through a flint. What seemed a big, black shaving came out of the ground, and when Ib examined it, it turned out to be metal. Where the plough had cut it, it glittered before him. It was a great, unwieldy armlet of the olden time. He had turned up a Hun's grave, and found his costly ornaments in it. Ib showed his find to the clergyman, who explained its worth to him, and then he went to the bench of magistrates, who informed the Curator of the Museum about the find, and gave Ib the advice to take the treasure to him in person. "You have found in the earth the very best thing you could," said the magistrate. "The best!" thought Ib, "the best of all for me, and in the earth! If that's the best, the gipsy was right in the fortune she told me!"

Ib went by boat from Aarhus to Copenhagen, and to one who had seldom crossed the river flowing by his home, it seemed an ocean voyage. On arriving in Copenhagen, the worth of the gold he had found was handed over to him, a considerable sum, six hundred thalers. So through the big city streets wandered Ib of the moor.



WHERE THE PLOUGH HAD CUT IT, IT GLITTERED BEFORE HIM . . . A GREAT, UNWIELDY ARMLET.

The night before the day he had fixed for his return, Ib missed his way, and took a different turning from the one he meant. He got down into a poor lane in the suburb of Christianshaven. No one was in sight. At last a tiny little girl came out of one of the miserable houses, and Ib asked her the way to the street he wanted. She looked timidly at him and began to cry violently. He asked her what was the matter, but could not make out her answer. However, as they went along the street, and stood together under a lamp, the light lit up the child's face, and a wave of deep emotion swept over him, for there stood little Christine's very self before his eyes, just as he remembered her from childhood. He entered the miserable house with the little girl, climbed the shaky narrow stairs, which led into a little garret under the tiles. The air in the room was heavy and stifling; there was no light burning, but from a corner came the sound of deep-drawn sighs. Ib struck a light with a match. It was the child's mother that lay groaning on the miserable pallet. "Can I help at all?" asked Ib. "The little one brought me up here, but I am a stranger in the city. Is there no neighbour, no one else I could call?" He raised the sick woman's head, and adjusted the pillow. It was Christine of the moor!

For years her name had not been spoken, for it would have disturbed Ib's peace of mind, and what true report had to tell of her was not good. The fortune that came to her husband from his people had made him overweening. He had given up his sure position, had travelled abroad for six months, and on his return, had run into debt, and lived in grand style. He drove his coach closer and closer to the ditch, till at last over he went. The scores of boon companions who frequented his table said he had his deserts for keeping house like a madman. One morning his dead body had been found in the canal.

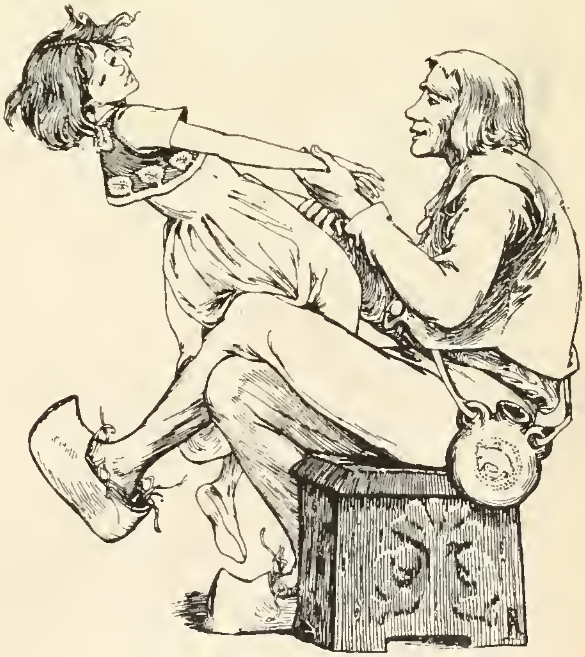
Christine already felt death's hand on her heart. Her baby, a few weeks old, conceived in prosperity and born in poverty, lay already in its grave, and it had come to this with Christine herself, that, sick to death, she lay deserted in a poor garret, in poverty that she would have been able to bear with patience in her younger days, but now, after the taste of prosperity, she felt deeply. It was her elder child, also named "little Christine," who was enduring want and hunger with her, and had now brought Ib to her.

"My great grief is at dying and leaving the poor child," she groaned; "ah, poor child! what will she do?" Not a sound more could she utter.

Ib took out another match, and lit a candle-end he found in the room, and the flame lit up the poor home. He looked at the little girl, and thought of Christine as a child. For her sake he could love this child that did not know him. The dying woman gazed at him; her eyes opened wider—did she recognise him? He knew not; never a word passed her lips.

* * * * *

It was in the wood by the river Gudenan, in the moorland. The air was thick and dark, the heather bore no flowers; the autumn storms whirled the yellow leaves from the woodland down into the stream across the moor where the fisherman's house stood, tenanted by strangers. But covered by the ridge, under shelter of the trees, stood the farmhouse, whitewashed and painted. Within, the peat glowed up the chimney; within was sunshine, the laughing gleam of a child's eyes, and the lark's spring notes sang in the tones from the child's red, smiling lips. Life and joy reigned there, for there was little Christine. She sat on Ib's knee, and Ib was father and mother both to her. Her own parents were vanished from her mind as the dream of child or grown man vanishes away. Ib sat within, in the pretty, tidy house, a well-to-do man. The little girl's mother lay in her grave in Copenhagen, dead in want. Ib had wealth, and what was more, he had his little Christine.



LIFE AND JOY REIGNED THERE, FOR THERE WAS LITTLE CHRISTINE.

The Cripple

THERE was an old mansion, where dwelt a generous young couple. Rich and prosperous themselves, they enjoyed life to the full, and freely bestowed their charity on others, wishing every one to be as happy as they were themselves.

On Christmas Eve, a beautifully decked Christmas tree stood in the old hall, where the fire blazed on the hearth, and fir branches were hung about the old pictures. The master and mistress met their guests, and mirth and revelry prevailed.

Earlier in the evening there was merry-making in the servants' hall. Here also stood a great fir-tree, lighted up with red and white candles, and tricked out with small Danish flags, swans and fishing nets of coloured paper filled with sweetmeats. The poor children of the parish were invited, and their mothers came with them. *They* did not look much at the tree—they looked at the Christmas tables where lay flannel and linen, and materials for warm winter clothing. Yes, that is where the mothers and the bigger children looked; only the wee mites stretched out their hands towards the candles, the tinsel ornaments, and the flags.

The whole party assembled early in the afternoon and ate their Christmas pudding, and roast goose with red cabbage. When the Christmas tree had been seen, and the presents distributed, each person received a small glass of punch and some dough-nuts.

When they came home into their own poor rooms, they talked of the good fare they had enjoyed, and the gifts were once more admired.

We must now speak of Havé-Kirsten and Havé-Olé. When they married they had their house and daily bread for weeding and digging in the garden of the mansion. Every Christmas they received their good share of presents; they had also five children, all of whom were clothed by the master and mistress.

"They are charitable people, our master and mistress!" they said. "But then they have enough and to spare, and outvie each other in kindly deeds!"

"Here are good clothes for the four children to wear out!" said Havé-Olé. "But why is there nothing for the cripple? They always used to remember him, although he was not at the feast."

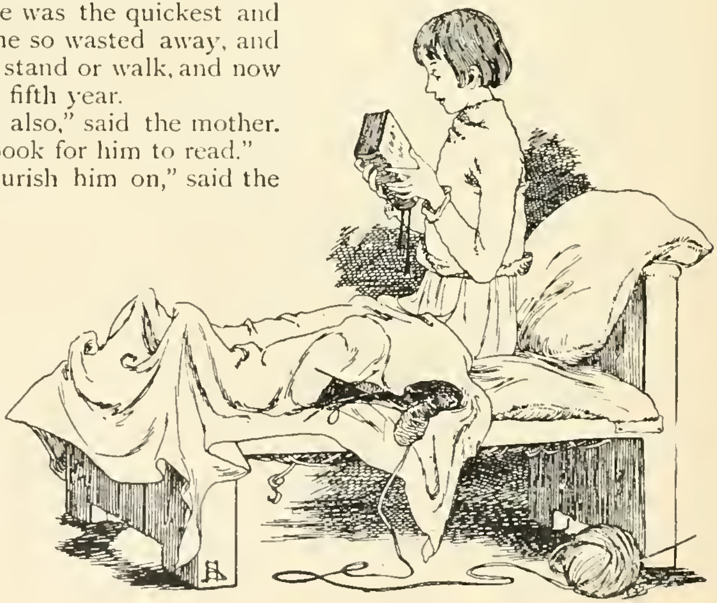
It was their eldest child they called "the cripple"; his name was Hans. When he was little, he was the quickest and liveliest of children; but his limbs in time so wasted away, and lost all strength, that he could no longer stand or walk, and now he had been confined to his bed from his fifth year.

"Yes, I received something for him also," said the mother. "But that is nothing much, it is only a book for him to read."

"Books are but poor things to nourish him on," said the father.

But Hans was pleased with it. He was a very intelligent boy, and was fond of reading; but he employed his time industriously, by working as far as he could, so as to be of some use although he was obliged always to keep his bed. He was deft, and kept his hands busy knitting woollen stockings, and even making patchwork quilts; the lady at the house had praised and purchased them.

It was a story book that Hans had received; full of good things for him to read and think about.



BUT HANS WAS PLEASED WITH IT.

"It is no kind of use here in the house!" said his parents. "But let him read to pass the time; he can't always be knitting stockings!"

* * * * * *

The spring came; flowers and green leaves began to shoot forth, together with weeds—as one may certainly call the nettles, although we all know what the old song says:—

"Though kings, in all their might arrayed,
Set forth to prove their mettle,
They could not make the smallest blade
To grow upon a nettle."

There was much to do in the garden of the mansion; not only for the gardener and his apprentices, but also for Havé-Kirsten and Havé-Olé.

"It is utter drudgery!" they said; "and when we have raked the paths, and made them quite neat, they are immediately trodden down again. Here are a lot of visitors and strangers at the mansion! What an expense that is! but the master and mistress are rich people."

"Things are strangely distributed!" said Olé. "We are all the Lord's children, the priest says. Why is there such a difference?"

"That is a consequence of the fall," said Kirsten.

And they talked about it again in the evening, in the room where Hans the cripple lay with his story-book.

Poverty, toil, and drudgery had made the parents hard in the hands, and also hard in their judgments; they could not grasp the fact or comprehend it, and they talked till they became quite discontented and angry.

"Some people meet with prosperity and good fortune, others only with poverty! Why should our first parents' disobedience and curiosity be visited upon us? We had not behaved as they did!"

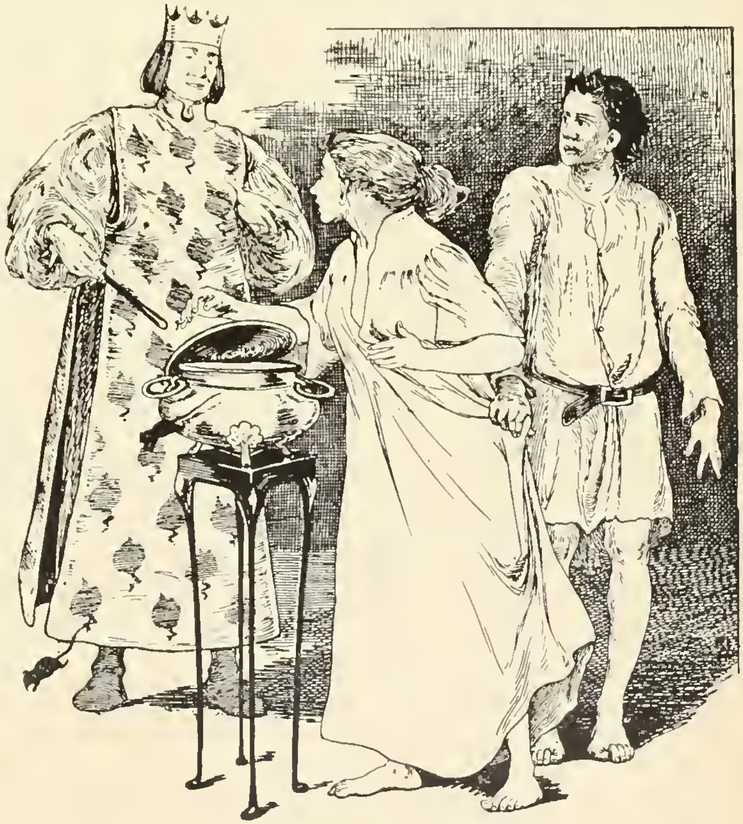
"Don't be too sure about that!" immediately said Hans the cripple.

"Listen to what my book says."

"What does it say in the book?" asked his parents.

And Hans read them the old tale of "The Woodcutter and his Wife"; they blamed Adam and Eve's curiosity, because that fault had caused their misfortune. Just then the King of that country came by. "Come home with me," he said, "and you shall receive just the same as I—seven dishes of food, and one for show. That one is a covered tureen which you must not touch, or your luxurious life will be at an end." "What can be in that tureen?" said the wife. "That does not concern us," said the man. "I am not inquisitive," said the wife, "but I should dearly like to know why we may not raise the cover; there must certainly be something delicious underneath!" "Perchance there is some mechanical contrivance there!" said the husband; "such as a pistol, that goes off and arouses the whole house!" "Alas!" said the woman, "you are right," and she did not touch the tureen.

But in the night she dreamt



"GOOD NIGHT," SAID THE KING, "NOW YOU CAN GO HOME AND CURSE YOUR FOLLY."

that the cover raised itself, and there came an odour of the most delicious punch, like one makes for very special occasions. Inscribed on a great silver medal were these words: "Drink this punch and you will become the richest couple in the world, and all other men shall be beggars"; and the woman awoke at that instant, and told the man her dream. "You are thinking too much about it," said he. "But we could lift it gently," said the woman. "Very gently, then!" said the man. And the woman very gently raised the cover. Then two lively little mice sprang out and were off into a mousehole. "Good night!" said the king. "Now you can go home and curse your own folly; but cease finding fault with Adam and Eve, for you yourselves have been quite as inquisitive and ungrateful."

"Where does that story come from?" said Havé-Olé. "It seems as if it must apply to us. It does indeed furnish us all with food for reflection!"

The next day they went to work again; they were scorched by the sun, and wet to the skin with the rain; they were full of discontented thoughts.

It was still the twilight of early evening at home, and they had eaten their porridge.

"Read us again the story of the Woodcutter," said Havé-Olé.

"There are so many delightful things in the book!" said Hans. "You don't know how many!"

"Yes! but I don't trouble myself about them," said Havé-Olé. "I will hear this one which I know."

And he and his wife listened to it again.

More than one evening they came back to that story.

"Yes, yes," pondered the old man; "the more I think, the clearer things seem to me; but still I am puzzled, for it seems with men, as with sweet milk when it curdles—some become fine cheese, and others thin, watery whey. Some people have good fortune in everything, sit at the head of the table every day, and know neither grief nor want."

Hans the cripple heard that. He was incapable in the legs, but clever in the head. He read to them out of the story-book about "The Man without Grief or Want."

"The King," so he read, "lay ill and could not be cured, except by being dressed in the shirt which had been worn by a man who could truly say that he had never known grief or want.

"Messengers were sent to all the countries in the world, to all palaces and mansions, to all prosperous and happy people; but when they were thoroughly questioned, they had all of them experienced grief and want.

"'That I have not!' said the swineherd, who sat in the ditch, and laughed, and sang. 'I am that most fortunate man.'

"'Then give us your shirt,' said the messengers, 'and you shall receive half of the kingdom.'

"But he had no shirt! and yet he called himself the most fortunate of mankind."

"He was a fine fellow!" shouted Havé-Olé; and he and his wife laughed as they had not done for a twelvemonth.

At that moment the schoolmaster came by.

"How pleased you are!" he said; "you have received good news. Have you won a prize in the lottery?"

"No, it is not of that kind," said Havé-Olé. "It is Hans, who has been reading to us out of his story-book. He read about "The Man without Grief or Want," and the fellow had no shirt! It does one good to hear of such a jovial beggar; and it is out of a printed book. Every one has his own load to bear; one is not alone in that. There is always that consolation."

"Where did you get this book?" asked the schoolmaster.

"It was given to our Hans at Christmas more than a year ago. The master and mistress gave it him. They know he is so fond of reading, and that he is a cripple. We should have been better pleased if he had got two linen shirts. But it is a wonderful book, it seems to answer one's thoughts."

The schoolmaster took the book and opened it.

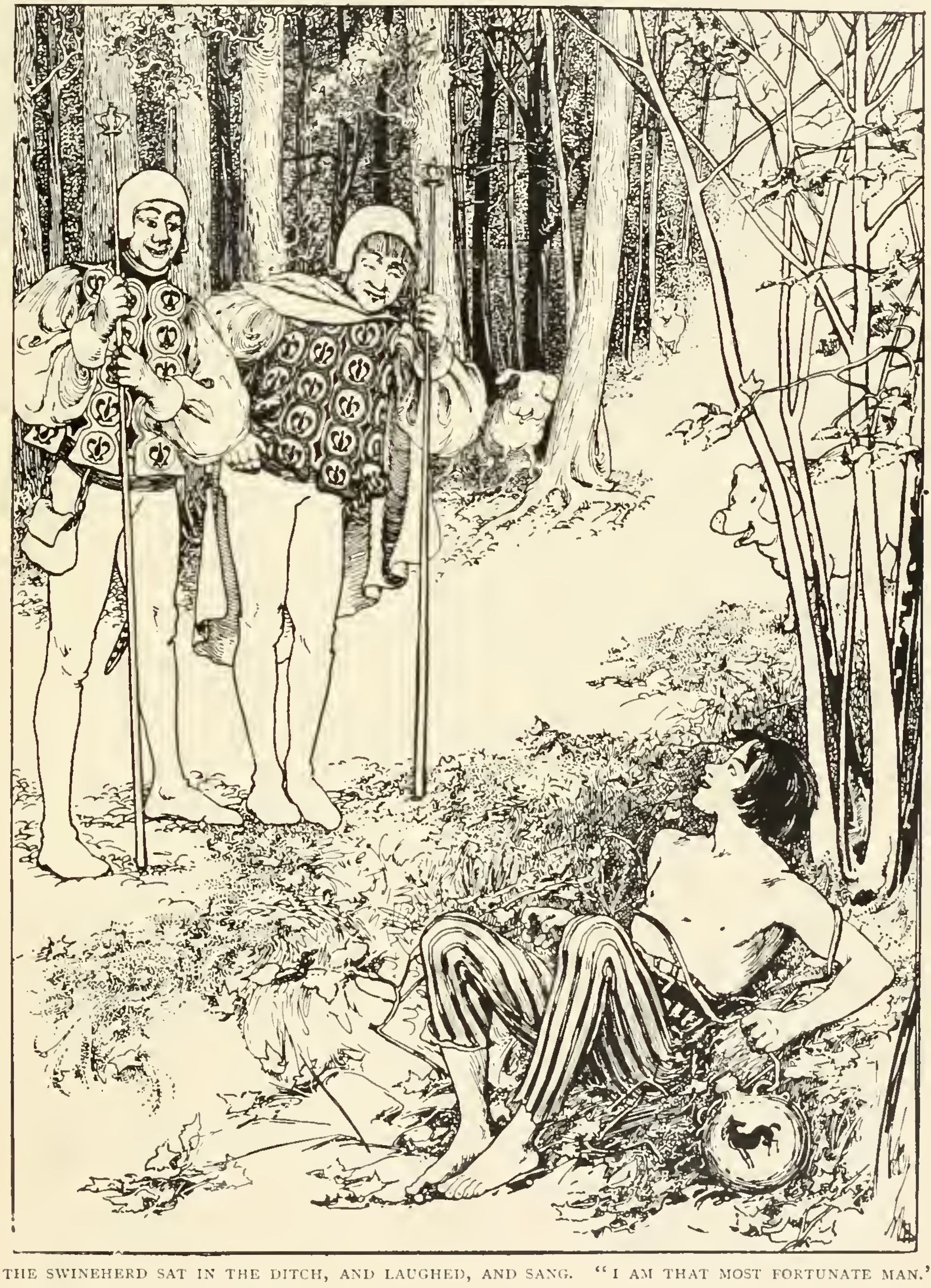
"Let us have the same story again," said Havé-Olé. "I don't quite understand it yet. And then let him also read the other about the Woodcutter."

These two stories seemed to be enough for Olé. They were like two sunbeams in that poor room, in that stunted mind which seemed so sullen and discontented.

Hans had read the whole book, he had read it many times over. The tales seemed to take him out into the world, where he himself could not go—where his legs could not carry him.

The schoolmaster sat by his bed; they talked together, and they both enjoyed doing so.

From that day the schoolmaster came more frequently to Hans, when his parents were at their work. It was like a festival for the boy every time he came. How he listened to what the old man told him—about the great world and its many countries, and that the sun was almost half a million[1] times larger than the earth, and so far off that a cannon-ball, in its flight from the sun to the earth, would take five-and-twenty years, whilst the rays of light could reach the earth in eight minutes.



THE SWINEHERD SAT IN THE DITCH, AND LAUGHED, AND SANG. "I AM THAT MOST FORTUNATE MAN."

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[1] The schoolmaster's mistake. The sun is more than 1,300,000 times as large as the earth.

Every intelligent school-boy now knows these things, but for Hans it was new and more wonderful than anything which he found in his story-book.

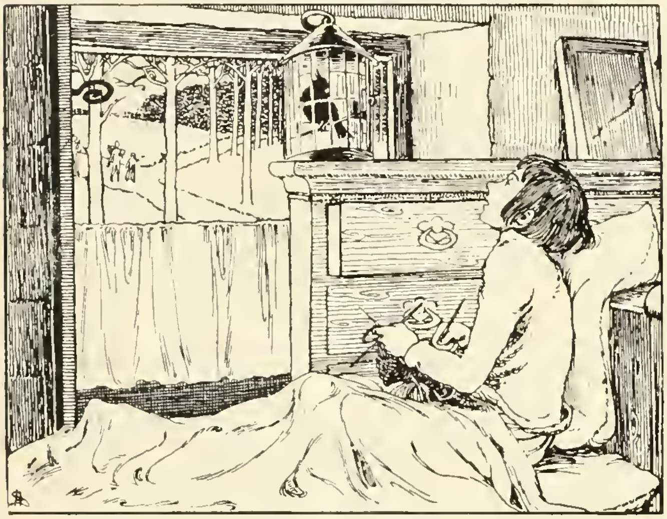
The schoolmaster came twice a year to dine with the master and mistress, and on one such occasion told them how acceptable the story-book was in that poor house, where only two stories in it had given a wise motto to live by and proved such a blessing. That weakly but clever little boy had by reading it brought reflection and joy into the house.

Then the schoolmaster took home from the mansion—for the mistress pressed them upon him—a couple of bright silver coins in his hand for little Hans.

"Father and Mother must have them," said the boy, when the schoolmaster brought him the money.

And Havé-Olé and Havé-Kirsten said: "Then Cripple Hans is also of some use, and a blessing to us."

A couple of days later, while the parents were at work at the mansion, the carriage stopped outside the cottage. It was the kind-hearted lady who had come, delighted that her Christmas present had been such a comfort and delight to the boy and his parents.



EVEN PEOPLE QUITE OUT ON THE HIGH ROAD COULD HEAR IT SINGING.

She brought with her some white bread, fruit, and a bottle of cordial; but, what was still more delightful, she brought him a little blackbird that could whistle beautifully in a gilt cage. The cage with the bird was put on the old chest of drawers near the boy's bed, where he could see and hear the bird; even people quite out on the high road could hear it singing.

Havé-Olé and Havé-Kirsten came home soon after the lady had driven away; they noticed how pleased Hans was, but they thought there would only be trouble with the present he had received.

"Rich people don't think about it!" they said. "Now we shall have that also to attend to. Cripple Hans is not able to do it. The end of it will be that the cat gets it!"

A week passed, and a second week; the cat had often been in the room during that time without even frightening the bird, let alone hurting it. Then a great event occurred. It was in the afternoon, the parents and the other children were at work, and Hans was quite alone. He had the story-book in his hand, and was reading about the Fisherman's Wife who had all her wishes gratified—she wished to be a queen, and she was one; she wished to be an empress, and she was one; but when she wished to be a goddess, she found herself seated again in the muddy ditch from which she had been raised.

Now this story had no application to the bird or the cat, but he was just reading this very story when the event happened; he always remembered that afterwards.

The cage stood on the chest of drawers, the cat stood on the floor and look fixedly with its greenish-yellow eyes at the bird. There was something in the cat's look as if it wished to say to the bird: "How charming you are! I should like to eat you."

Hans could understand that; he read it in the cat's face.

"Be off, puss!" he shouted. "Get out of the room!"

Then it seemed to be making ready to spring.

Hans could not reach it; he had nothing else to throw at it but his dearest treasure—the story-book. He threw it; but the binding was loose, it flew to one side and the book itself with all its leaves flew to the other side. The cat slowly moved a little back into the room and looked at Hans, as if it would say:—

"Don't interfere in this affair, little Hans! I can walk and I can spring; you can do neither."

Hans fixed his eyes on the cat and was in great anxiety; the bird also was restless. There was no one he could call to, and it seemed as if the cat, seeming to know this, crouched down ready to spring again. Hans shook his counterpane—he could use his hands—but the cat did not trouble about the counterpane; and when that also was thrown at it without avail the cat sprang on the chair and into the window-sill, where it was nearer the bird.

Hans could feel his own hot blood in his veins, but he did not think of that, he only thought of the cat and the bird; the boy could not get out of bed by himself, he could not stand on his legs, still less could he walk. It was as if his heart changed within him when he saw the cat spring from the window right on to the chest of drawers and push against the cage and upset it. The bewildered bird fluttered about inside.

Hans gave a scream, he felt a wrench within him, and, without thinking, he sprang out of his bed towards the chest of drawers, pulled the cat down, and caught firm hold of the cage where the terrified bird was. He held the cage in his hands and ran with it out of the door into the road.

Then the tears welled to his eyes; he shouted with joy, and cried aloud: "I can walk! I can walk!"

He had recovered his strength; such a thing can happen, and it had happened to him.

The schoolmaster lived close by; he ran to him with bare feet, with only his shirt and jacket on and with the bird in the cage.

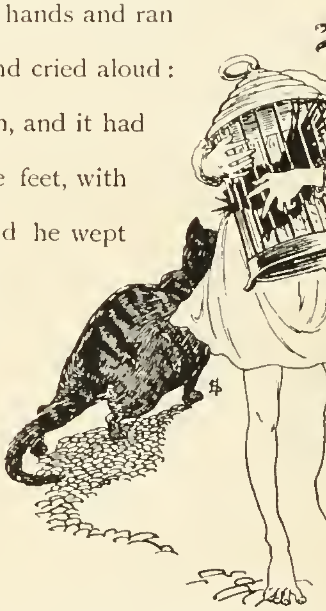
"I can walk!" he shouted. "O Lord, I thank Thee!" and he wept tears of joy.

Conceive if you can what joy there was in the house of Havé-Olé and Havé-Kirsten. "We shall not live to see a happier day!" they both said.

Hans was summoned to the mansion; he had not gone that way for many a year; and it seemed as if the trees and hazel-bushes which he remembered so well nodded to him, and said: "Good-day, Hans; you are welcome here!" The sun shone on his face and right into his heart.

The master and mistress, the kind young couple at the great house, let him sit with them and looked as pleased as if he had been one of their own family.

No one was more pleased than the lady who had given him the story-book and the little bird: the bird had died of fright, but it seemed to have proved his salvation, and the book had quickened the spirit within him and his parents; *that* he still had, he would keep it and read it if he were ever so old. And now he, also, would be of some use at home. He would learn a trade, perhaps be a bookbinder; "for then," he said, "I can get all the new books to read."



HE HELD THE CAGE IN HIS HANDS, AND RAN WITH IT OUT OF THE DOOR INTO THE ROAD.

In the afternoon the lady sent for both his parents. She and her husband had been talking together about Hans; he was a gentle and clever boy, and was quick and fond of reading.

That evening his parents came home from the mansion well pleased, especially Kirsten, but the next day she wept because little Hans had to leave home; he was dressed in good clothes, and he was a dutiful boy, but he must now go to school to learn Latin, far away beyond the sea, and many years must pass before they would see him again.

He did not take the story-book with him, his parents wished to have it as a keepsake. And his father often read in it, but only the two stories, because he knew them.

And they had letters from Hans, each happier than the last. He was with excellent people who were in easy circumstances, and it was most delightful to go to school, there was so much to learn; he now only wished to be a hundred years old that he might become a schoolmaster.

"Oh, that we might live to see it!" said his parents; and they pressed each other's hands as at the communion.

"What good fortune has happened to Hans!" said Olé. "The Lord remembers the poor man's child; we have had proof of that with our cripple! Has it not come true even as our Hans read it to us out of the story-book?"

* * *

The Old Bachelor's Nightcap

THERE is a street in Copenhagen oddly named Hysken Stråde, and one naturally asks what Hysken signifies, and why Hysken at all. Common report says it is a German word, but in justice to the German tongue this is not the case, since it would then have been Hauschen, of which Hysken is the Danish corruption, and it means "the street of tiny houses."

For many a year it consisted of nothing but wooden booths, such as may be seen to this day in the market-place; possibly they were a little larger. The window-panes were not of glass, but horn, for at that time glass was too expensive for general use. Remember, we are speaking of many years ago. Your great-grandfather would have called them "the olden times." Yes, several hundred years ago.

Trade in Copenhagen was entirely, or nearly so, in the hands of wealthy Bremen and Lübeck merchants, whose clerks (for they themselves stayed at home) lived in the Hysken Stråde, in the booths of this street of tiny houses, and sold beer and groceries. Delicious German beer it was too, and all kinds for sale—Bremen, Prussian, and Brunswick, and spices of every variety—saffron, aniseed, ginger, and above all pepper. Indeed, this was the staple commodity—hence the German clerks in Denmark acquired the nickname Pepper-folk—and since they were bound not to marry whilst in that country, many grew old and grey in service, and, as they performed their own domestic services themselves, they became crabbed old fellows with whimsical ideas. This being so, it became usual to dub all crotchety old bachelors "pepper-fogeys," an expression now naturalised into the German language. This must be borne in mind if you would understand what follows.

These pepper-fogeys used to be unmercifully ridiculed, and told to pull down a nightcap over their ears and toddle off to bed, and many are the doggerel verses in which the nightcap figures. Yes, fun was poked at the pepper-fogeys with their nightcaps, just because they were so little known. And why should not one wish for a nightcap? you may ask. Listen, and I will tell you.

Hauschen Street was in those days unpaved, and wayfarers stumbled along as if it were a little side-alley. So narrow indeed was it, and so huddled together the booths, that in summertime a sail would be stretched from side to side, and strong was the fragrance of saffron and ginger pervading the stalls, behind which there served for the most part old men. They were not, however, clothed, as in the portraits of our ancestors, with peruke, knee-breeches, elegant waistcoat and tunic of ample cut, as you might suppose.

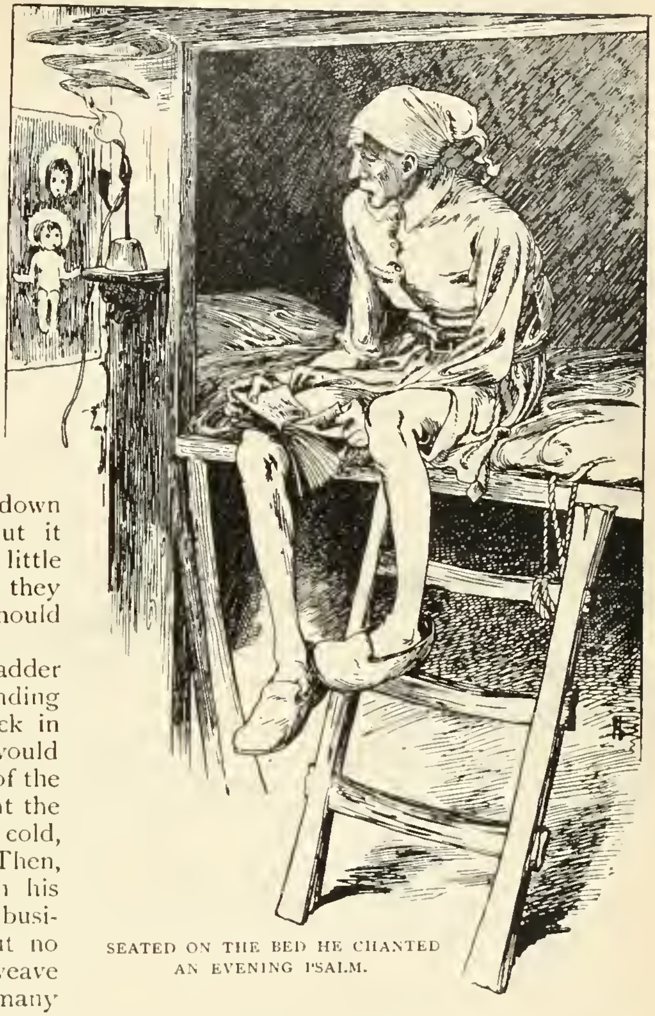
No, these old pepper-fogeys were no dandies to be portrayed on canvas, though one could well wish to have a picture of one as he stood at the counter, or betook himself with leisurely gait to church on holy days. A broad-brimmed hat, high in the crown, in which maybe the younger among them would sport a feather, a woollen shirt beneath a wide flapping collar, a close-fitting jacket, a loose cloak worn over it, and the trousers tucked into the broadly-peaked shoes, for stockings had they none. At his belt a knife and fork, and a larger knife for self-defence—a necessary precaution in those days.

Such was the costume of old Anthony, one of the oldest of the pepper-fogeys, only in place of the broad-brimmed, high-crowned hat he always wore a sort of bonnet, under which was a knitted skullcap, a veritable nightcap, which never left his head. One or other, for he had two, was always on his head day and night. He formed a perfect study for an artist, so lean and wizened was he, so wrinkled his brow, his fingers so skinny, his eyebrows so bushy. He was said to be a native of Bremen; but in truth, though his master was, old Anthony was born at Eisenach, hard by the Wartburg. He never told the others, but pondered over it the more.

The old fellows did not often come together. He stayed in his own room, a dim light penetrating the opaque window-panes. Seated on the bed, he chanted his evening psalm. Theirs was not a happy lot—strangers in a strange land, heeded by none, save to be brushed aside when in the way.

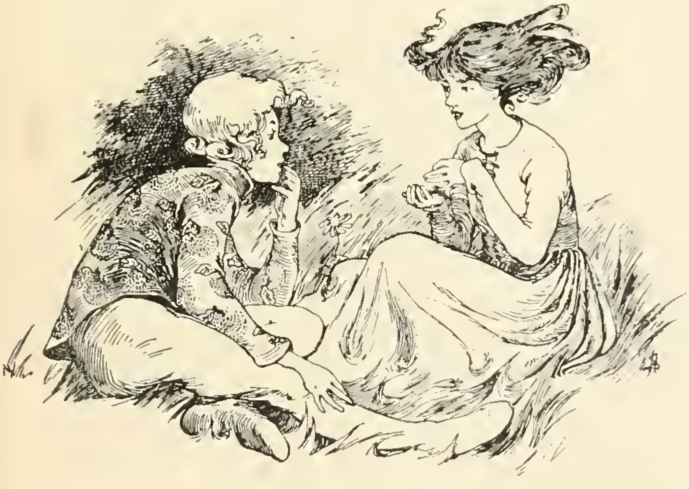
On black nights, when the rain was pelting down outside, it was far from cosy within. Not a lamp visible, save that which threw a light on a picture of the Virgin painted on the wall. Hark to the rain beating in torrents on the masonry of the castle-wharf! Such evenings were long and dreary without some task. To arrange and rearrange things in the house, to make paper bags, to polish scales, is not work for every day. One must find other things to do, as did old Anthony. He would darn his clothes, and patch up his boots. And when at last he went to bed, true to his habit, down he would draw his nightcap, but soon raised it to see the candle was quite extinguished. He would snuff out the wick between finger and thumb, pull down his nightcap, and turn over to sleep. But it occurred to him to see if the ashes on the little hearth in the corner were quite burnt out; if they were damped enough, lest a stray spark should kindle a fire, and do damage.

Up he would get again, creep down the ladder (for steps they could not be called), and finding not a spark in the ash-pan, would go back in peace. But before he was half in bed he would have a doubt whether the bolts and shutters of the shop were secured, and down once more went the tottering feet, his teeth a-chattering with the cold, for never such biting frost as in late winter. Then, pulling up the coverlet and drawing down his nightcap, he would dismiss all thoughts of business and the day's toil from his mind. But no happier than before—old memories would weave their fantastic shapes before his fancy, and many a thorn lay hidden in the garlands.



SEATED ON THE BED HE CHANTED AN EVENING PSALM.

When one pricks one's finger tears brim to the eyelids, and oftentimes old Anthony shed hot and bitter tears, that glistened like pearls. The largest pearls would fall on the coverlet with so sad a sound that it seemed his heart's strings were breaking.



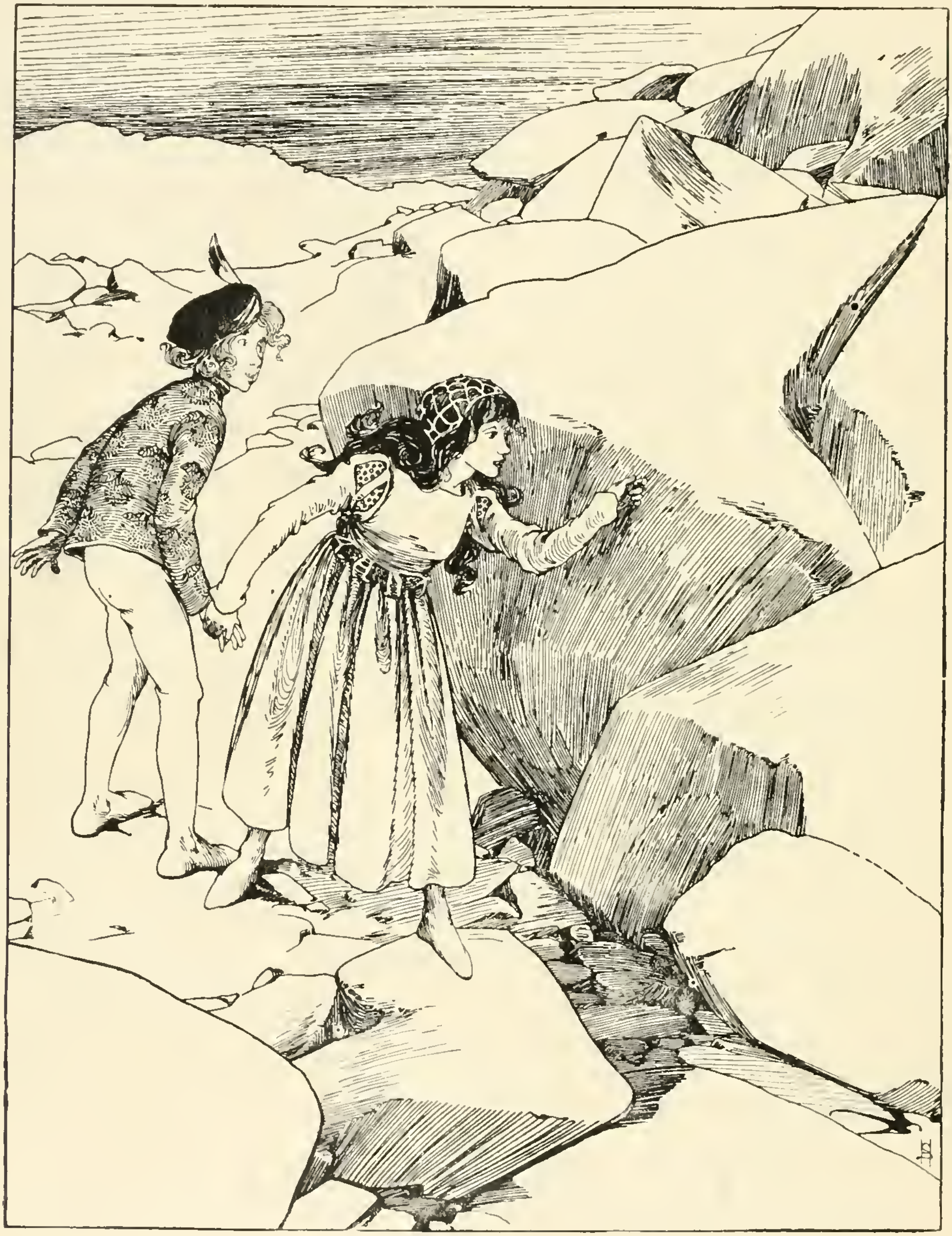
ONE PIP . . . THE LITTLE GIRL PROPOSED THEY SHOULD PLANT IN THE EARTH.

Brightly would they glisten and illumine pictures of his childhood, never-fading memories.

As he dried his tears on the nightcap, the scenes would vanish, but not the source of his tears: that lay deep in his heart.

The scenes did not follow the natural sequence of life: the saddest and most joyful together, but the last had the deepest shadows.

The beech forests of Denmark are admitted by all to be fine, but fairer still to the eyes of old Anthony were those around the Wartburg. More majestic and lofty the aged trees around the baronial castle, where the foliage of creepers trailed over the stone buttresses. Sweeter there the perfume of apple blossoms. Vividly did he call them to mind, and a shining tear rolled down his cheek, wherein he saw two children, a boy and a girl, at play. The boy, rosy-cheeked and curly-haired,



"LADY HOLLE! LADY HOLLE!" SHE CRIED, LOUD AND CLEAR.

with clear blue eyes, was himself the little Anthony. The girl had brown eyes, dark hair, and a merry, bright expression. She was the Burgomaster's daughter, Molly. The children were playing with an apple, which they shook to hear the pips rattle inside. They shared the apple and ate it up, all but one pip, which the little girl proposed they should plant in the earth.

"Then you will see something you'd never think of," said she; "an apple tree will grow, but not all at once." So they busied themselves planting it in a flower pot. He made a hole, and she laid the pip in, and both heaped on the earth.

"Mind," said she, "you don't dig up the pip to see if it has struck root. Indeed, you mustn't. I did so—only twice—because I knew no better, and the flowers withered." Anthony kept the flower pot, and every day the winter through watched it, but nothing was to be seen but the black earth. Then came the spring and warm sunshine, and two little twigs peeped forth from the pot. "Oh, how lovely!" cried Anthony, "they are for Molly and me."

Soon came another shoot; whom could that represent? Then another and yet another, and every week it grew, till it became a big plant. All this was mirrored in a single tear. Brush it away as he might, the source dwelled deep in his bosom.

Not far from Eisenach is a ridge of rocky heights, treeless and bare, known as the Venusberg.

Here was the abode of Venus, goddess of heathen mythology, known also to every child round about as Lady Holle. She it was who lured the knightly Tannhäuser, the minstrel of the Wartburg, to her mountain.

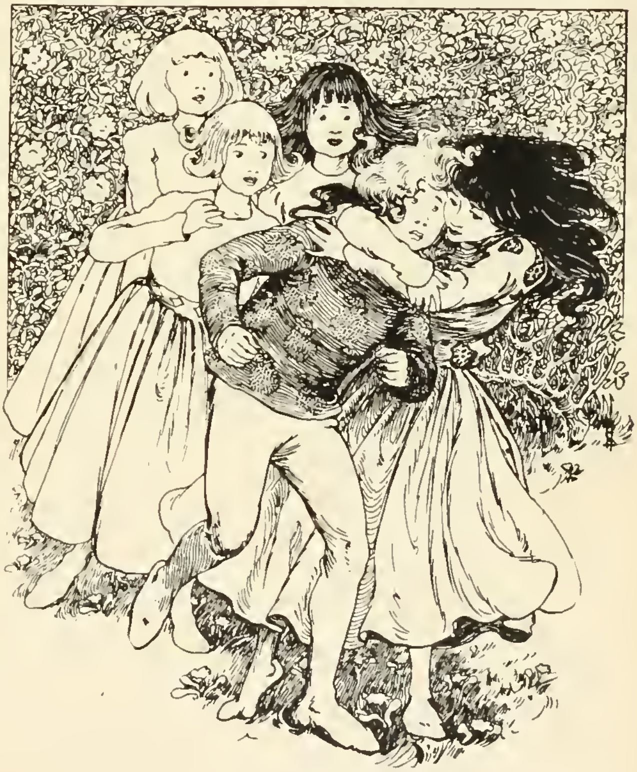
Little Molly and Anthony would ofttimes stand at the foot of the mountain, and one day she asked him, "Do you dare knock and say, 'Lady Holle! Lady Holle! open the door. Tannhäuser is here'?" But Anthony was afraid, only his playmate ventured.

"Lady Holle! Lady Holle!" she cried, loud and clear, but the rest so low and indistinct that he believed that she did not utter it. She looked so winning and was of such high spirit. When they were at play with other children in the garden, Molly alone of them all would dare to kiss him, just because he was unwilling and resisted. "I dare kiss him," she would cry, and throw her arms round his neck, and the boy would submit to her embrace, for how charming, how saucy she was, to be sure!

Lady Holle, so people said, was beautiful, but her beauty was that of a wicked temptress. The noblest type of beauty was that of the devout Elizabeth, tutelary saint of the land, the pious lady whose gracious actions were known near and far. Her picture hangs in the chapel lit up by silver lamps, but she and Molly bore no resemblance to one another.

The apple tree they had planted grew year by year till it was so large it had to be planted anew in the open air, where the dew fell and the sun shed his warm rays; and it flourished and grew hardy, and could bear the wintry blast, blossoming in the springtide as if for very joy. In the autumn it bore two apples—one for Molly, one for Anthony. Rapidly grew the tree, and with it grew Molly, fresh as one of its blossoms; but not for long was Anthony fated to watch this fair flower.

All things here on earth are subject to change.


"I DARE KISS HIM," SHE WOULD CRY, AND THROW HER ARMS ROUND HIS NECK.

Molly's father left the old home and went afar. Nowadays, by the railroad, it takes but some few hours, but in those times over a day and night, to travel so far east as to Weimar.

Both Molly and Anthony cried, and she told him he was more to her than all the fine folk in Weimar could be.

A year passed by—two, three years—and only two letters came: the first sent by a letter-carrier, the other by a traveller—a long and devious way by town and hamlet.

How often had he and Molly together read the story of Tristan and Isolde, and bethought them the name Tristan meant "conceived in tribulation." But with Anthony no such thought could be harboured as "She has forsaken me."

True, Isolde did *not* forsake Tristan; buried side by side in the little churchyard, the lime trees met and entwined over their graves. Anthony loved this story, sad though it was.

But no sad fate could await him and Molly, and blithely he sang as he rode in the clear moonlight towards Weimar to visit Molly.

He would fain come unexpected, and unexpected he came.

And welcome they made him. Wine-cups filled to the brim, distinguished company, a comfortable room, all these he found, but it was not as he had pictured it, dreamed of it.

Poor Anthony could not make it out, could not understand them, but we can. We know how one may be in the midst of others and yet be solitary; how one talks as fellow-voyagers in a post-chaise, boring one another, and each wishing the other far away.

One day Molly spoke to him. "I am straightforward, I will tell you all. Since we were playmates together much has altered. It is not only an outward change in me you see. Habit and will do not control our affections. I wish you well, Anthony, and would not have you bitter towards me when I am far away, but love, deep love, I cannot feel for you. Fare thee well!"

So Anthony bade her farewell. No tear bedimmed his eye, but he felt he had lost a friend. Within four and twenty hours he was back in Eisenach; the horse that bore him, bore him no more.

"What matter?" said he, "I am lost. I will destroy whatever reminds me of the Lady Holle. The apple tree—I will uproot it, shatter it. Never more shall it bloom and bear fruit."

But the tree was not injured. Anthony lay on his bed, stricken with fever. What can avail him. Suddenly a medicine, the bitterest medicine known to man, cured his fever, convulsing body and soul. Anthony's father was no longer the rich merchant he had been!

Troublous days, days of trial, awaited them. Misfortune fell upon the home; the father, dogged by fate, became poor. So Anthony had other things to think about than the resentment he cherished in his heart towards Molly. He must take his father's place, he must go out into the great world and earn his bread.

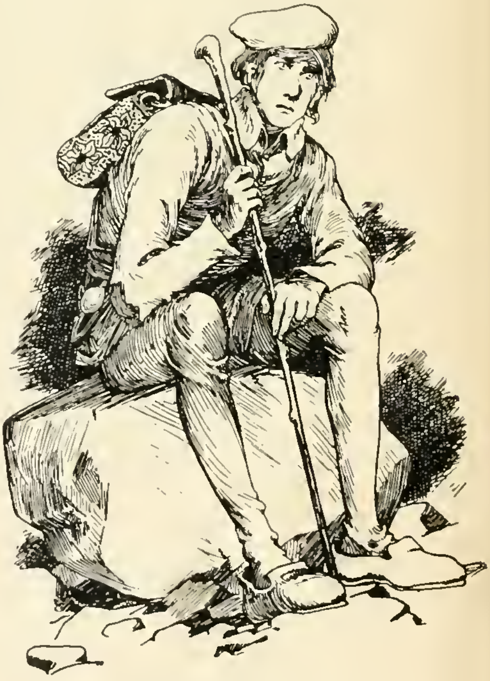
He reached Bremen: hardship and dreary days were his lot—days that harden the heart or sometimes make it very tender. How he had misjudged his fellow-men in his young days! He became resigned and cheerful. God's way is best, was his thought. How had it been if heaven had not turned her affection to another before this calamity? "Thanks be to heaven," he would say. "She was not to blame, and I have felt so bitter towards her."

Time passed on. Anthony's father died, and strangers occupied the old home. But he was destined to see it once more. His wealthy master sent him on business that brought him once more to Eisenach, his native town.

The old Wartburg was unchanged—the monk and nun hewn on its stones. The grand old trees set off the landscape as of old. Over the valley the Venusberg rose, a grey mass in the twilight. He longed to say, "Lady Holle! Lady Holle! open the door to me. Fain would I stay for ever." It was a sinful thought, and he crossed himself. Old memories crowded to his mind as he gazed with tear-bedewed eyes at the town of childhood's days. The old homestead stood unchanged, but the garden was not the same. A roadway crossed one corner of it. The apple tree, which he had *not* destroyed, was no longer in the garden, but across the way.

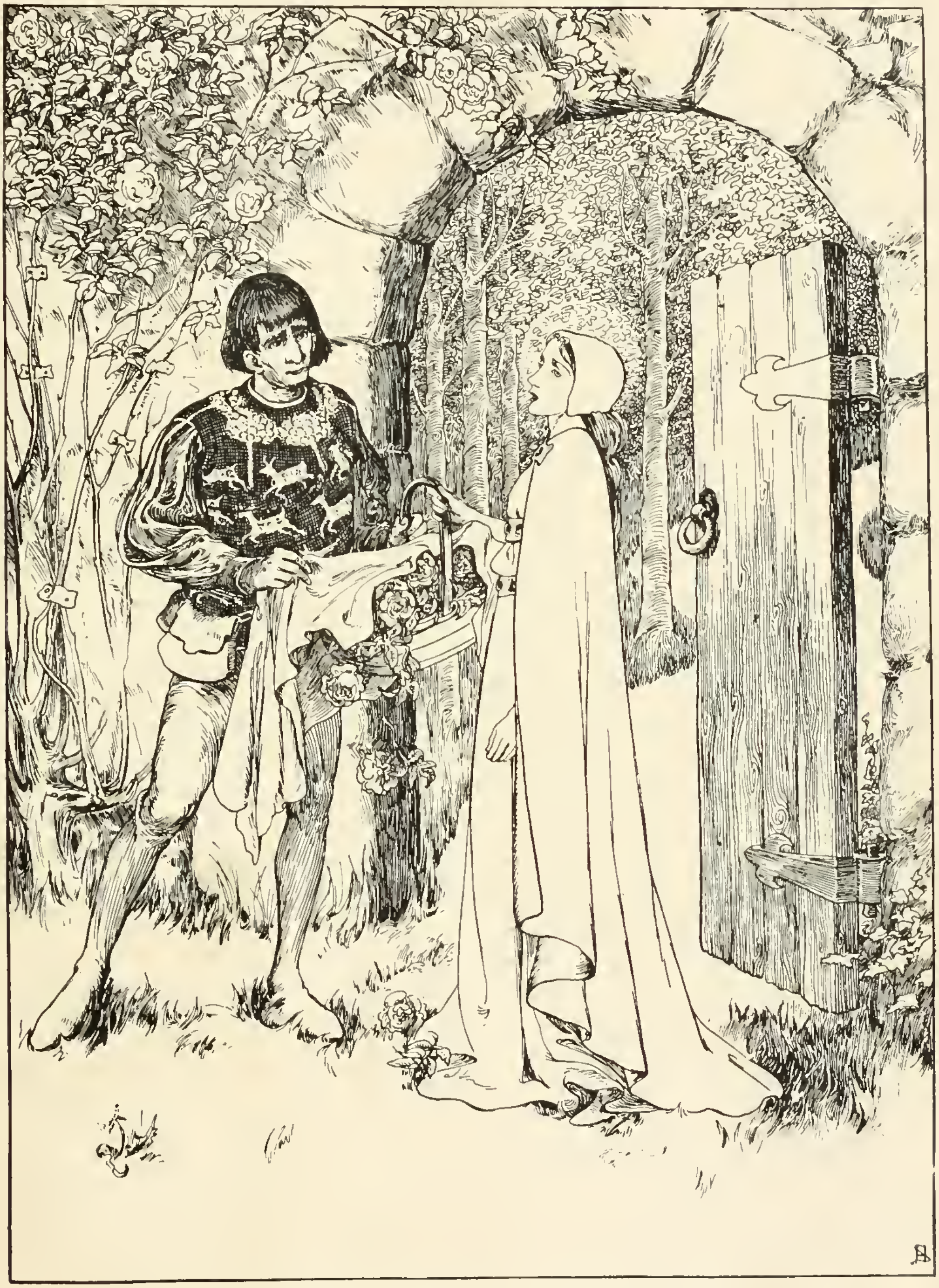
Still, as of old, bathed in sunshine and dew, the old tree bore richly, and its boughs were laden with fruit. One of its branches was broken. Wilful hands had done this, for the tree now stood by the highway.

Passers by plucked its blossoms, gathered its fruit, and broke its branches. Well might one say, as one says of men, "This was not its destiny as it lay in its cradle." So fair its prospects, that this should be the end! Neglected, forsaken, no longer tended, there between field and highway it stood—



HE LONGED TO SAY, "LADY HOLLE! LADY HOLLE! OPEN THE DOOR TO ME."

bare to the storm, shattered and rent. As the years roll by it puts forth fewer blossoms, less fruit—and its story comes to a close!



WINE, BREAD, AND ALL THE BASKET HELD, MIRACULOUSLY CHANGED TO ROSES.

So mused Anthony many a lonely evening in his room in the wooden booth in a strange land, in the narrow street in Copenhagen, whither his rich master sent him bound by his vow not to marry.

Marriage, forsooth, for him! Ha, ha! he laughed a strange laugh.

The winter was early that year with sharp frost. Outside raged a blinding snowstorm, so that every one that could stayed indoors. And so it befell that his neighbours never saw that for two days his shop was unopened, nor Anthony been seen, for who would venture out if not compelled to?

Those were sad, dismal days in his room, where the panes were not of glass, and—at best but faintly lighted—it was often pitch dark. For two days did Anthony keep his bed; he lacked strength to rise. The bitter weather affected his old joints. Forgotten was the pepper-fogey; helpless he lay. Scarce could he reach the water-jug by the bedside, and the last drop was drunk. Not fever, not sickness, laid him low: it was old age.

It was perpetual night to him as he lay there.

A little spider spun a web over the bed, as if for a pall when he should close his eyes for ever.

Long and very dreary was the time. Yet he shed no tears, nor did he suffer pain. His only thought was that the world and its turmoil were not for him; that he was away from them even as he had passed from the thoughts of others.

At one time he seemed to feel the pangs of hunger, to faint with thirst. Was no one coming? None could come. He thought of those who perished of thirst, thought how the saintly Elisabeth, the noble lady of Thuringen, visited the lowliest hovels, bearing hope to and succouring the sick. Her pious deeds inspired his thoughts; he remembered how she would console those in pain, bind up their wounds, and though her stern lord and master stormed with rage, bear sustenance to the starving. He called to mind the legend how her husband followed her as she bore a well-stocked basket to the poor, and confronting her demanded what lay within. How in her great dread she replied, "Flowers I have culled in the garden." How when he snatched aside the cloth to see whether her words were true, wine, bread, and all the basket held miraculously changed to roses.

Such was the picture of the saint; so his weary eyes imagined her standing by his bed in the little room in a strange land. He raised his head and gazed into her gentle eyes. All around seemed bright and rosy-hued. The flowers expanded, and now he smelt the perfume of apple blossoms; he saw an apple tree in bloom, its branches waving above him. It was the tree the children had planted in the flower pot together.

And the drooping leaves fanned his burning brow and cooled his parched lips; they were as wine and bread on his breast. He felt calm and serene, and composed himself to sleep.

"Now I will sleep, and it will bring relief. To-morrow I shall be well; to-morrow I will rise. I planted it in love; I see it now in heavenly radiance." And he sunk to rest.

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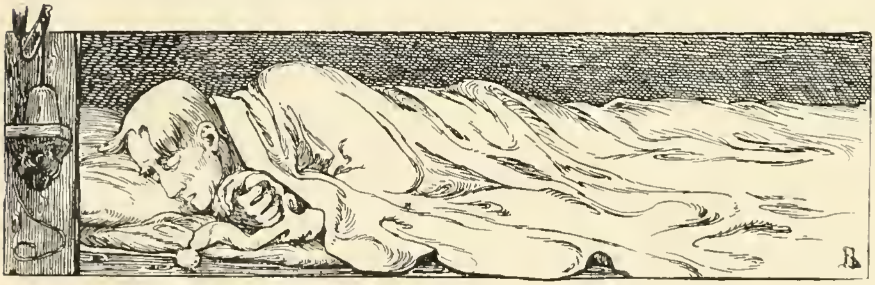
On the morrow—the third day—the storm abated, and his neighbours came to see old Anthony. Prone he lay, clasping in death his old nightcap in his hands.



PRONE HE LAY, CLASPING IN DEATH HIS OLD NIGHTCAP.

Where were the tears he had shed, where the pearls? They were still in the nightcap. True pearls change not. The old thoughts, the tears of long ago—yes, they remained in the nightcap of the old pepper-fogey.

Covet not the old nightcap. It would make your brow burn, your pulse beat fast. It brings strange dreams. The first to put it on was to know this. It was fifty years later that the Burgomaster, who lived in luxury with wife and children, put it on. His dreams were of unhappy love, ruin, and starvation.

"Phew! how the nightcap burns," said he, and tore it off, and pearl after pearl fell from it to the ground. "Good gracious!" cried the Burgomaster, "I must be feverish; how they sparkle before my eyes." They were tears, wept half a century before by old Anthony of Eisenach.

To all who thereafter put on the nightcap came agitating visions and dreams. His own history was changed to that of Anthony, till it became quite a story. There may be many such stories; we, however, leave others to tell them.

We have told the first, and our last words shall be, "Don't wish for the old bachelor's nightcap."